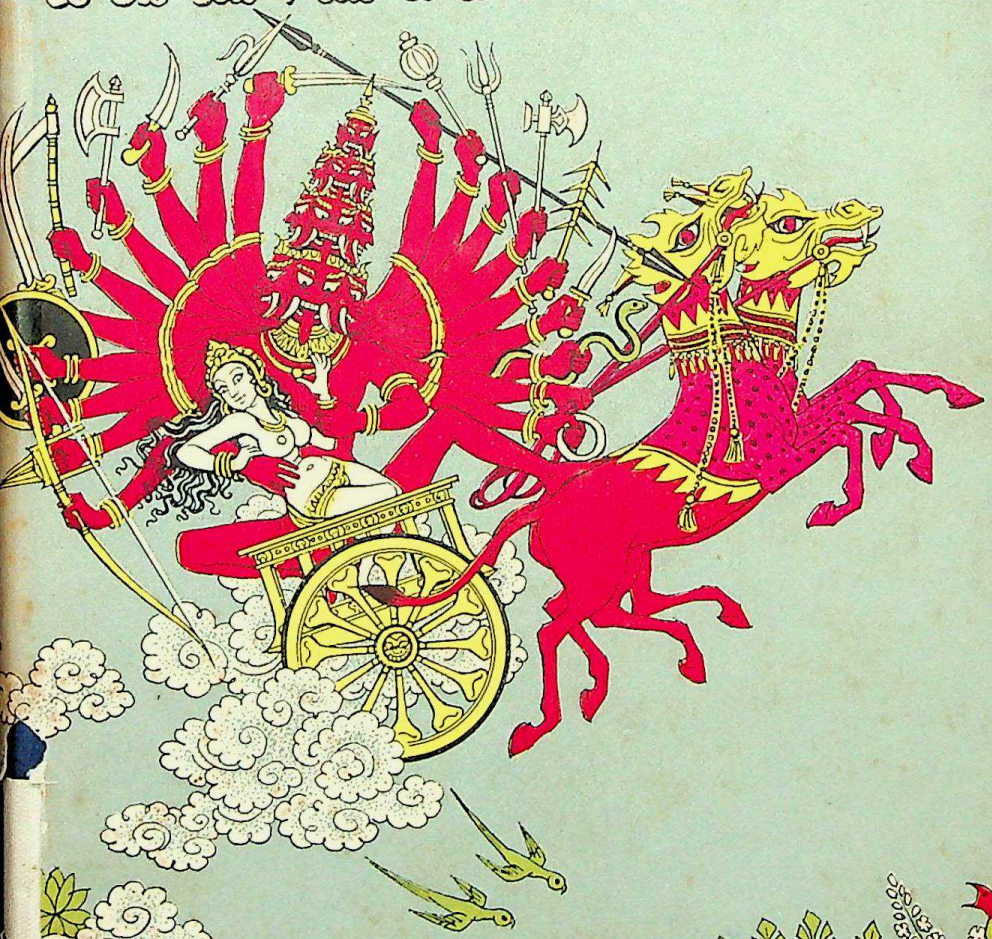
CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

BARBARA LEONIE PICARD

THE STORY OF RAMA AND SITA

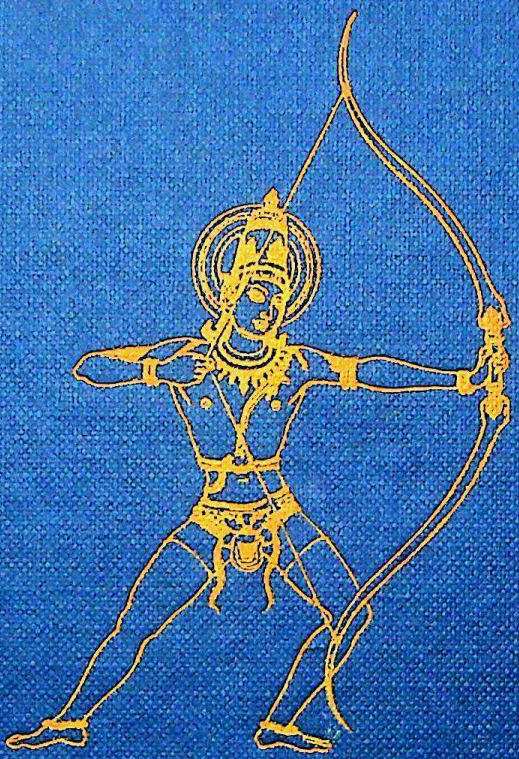


ILLUSTRATED BY

CHARLES W. STEWART

Charles Stewart

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

THE STORY OF RĀMA AND SĪTĀ

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

THE STORY OF RĀMA AND SĪTĀ

BY

BARBARA LEONIE PICARD

ILLUSTRATED BY

CHARLES STEWART

GEORGE G. HARRAP & CO. LTD
LONDON TORONTO WELLINGTON SYDNEY

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

First published in Great Britain 1960
by GEORGE G. HARRAP & CO. LTD
182 High Holborn, London, W.C.1

© *Barbara Leonie Picard* 1960

Composed in Linotype Granjon type and printed by
Western Printing Services Ltd, Bristol
Made in Great Britain

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Contents

CHAPTER		PAGE
1.	The Marriage of Rāma	11
2.	The Banishment	22
3.	Sītā Lost	38
4.	The Quest for Sītā	56
5.	War in Lankā	70

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Author's Note

The Story of Rāma and Sītā is retold from the *Rāmāyana*, one of the two great epics of the Hindus. Its hero, Rāma, is an *avatāra*—a 'descent,' or incarnation—of the god Vishnu, the Preserver, who has on occasions been born as a man or an animal for the benefit of mankind. Vishnu is a dark god, and in Hindu paintings his *avatāras* are always depicted as blue in colour.

The pronunciation of the transcribed Sanskrit names is not difficult if it is remembered that vowels are pronounced as follows:

a as *a* in 'ample'	*ā* (with a stress mark) as *a* in 'father'
e as *a* in 'cake'	
i as *i* in 'ill'	*ī* (with a stress mark) as *ee* in 'eel'
o as *o* in 'note'	
u as *u* in 'full'	*ū* (with a stress mark) as *oo* in 'cool'

For the rest, it will be sufficient for the readers of this book to know that except in the combinations *ch* and *sh* —which are pronounced as in 'church' and 'shell' respectively—the letter *h* is always sounded separately from the consonant it follows, as in 'cab-horse,' 'red-hot,' 'pot-hole,' and 'black-haired.'

I should like to thank Gopal Shankar Ranganathan, who so kindly read the manuscript of this book and advised me on it; and my cousin, Owen Martin, who answered my many questions on India.

B.L.P.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

I

The Marriage of Rāma

One day, at a time when the world was young, there came together for a council, in the heaven of Brahmā, the Creator, all the gods of India: Agni, who is fire and light; Indra, god of the sky, who fights each year with the demons of drought, and sends rain to make green the dry earth when it is parched by the summer sun; Yama, the god of death; kindly, elephant-headed Ganesha, patron of all learning and bringer of good fortune; Kāmadeva, the god of love; Vāyu, who is the wind; Kartikeya, god of war, who had been nursed by the stars, riding on his peacock, and carrying his bow and his arrow; and all the many other gods. They chose for their spokesman Indra; and, holding his thunderbolt, Indra stood forth before the three greatest gods of all: Brahmā, who is the Creator, Vishnu, who is the Preserver, and Shiva, who is the Destroyer. And Indra spoke for the other gods. "In the island of Lankā," he said, "there dwells Rāvana, the king of all the *rākshasas*, those demons who trouble the world with their evil ways. He is grown so powerful that he takes for himself sacrifices that are meant for us, and even Agni and Vāyu must do his will if he so bids them. Good Brahmā, deliver us from the power of Rāvana and grant that he may be destroyed."

Four-faced Brahmā answered him. "Long ago I gave

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

I

The Marriage of Rāma

One day, at a time when the world was young, there came together for a council, in the heaven of Brahmā, the Creator, all the gods of India: Agni, who is fire and light; Indra, god of the sky, who fights each year with the demons of drought, and sends rain to make green the dry earth when it is parched by the summer sun; Yama, the god of death; kindly, elephant-headed Ganesha, patron of all learning and bringer of good fortune; Kāmadeva, the god of love; Vāyu, who is the wind; Kartikeya, god of war, who had been nursed by the stars, riding on his peacock, and carrying his bow and his arrow; and all the many other gods. They chose for their spokesman Indra; and, holding his thunderbolt, Indra stood forth before the three greatest gods of all: Brahmā, who is the Creator, Vishnu, who is the Preserver, and Shiva, who is the Destroyer. And Indra spoke for the other gods. "In the island of Lankā," he said, "there dwells Rāvana, the king of all the *rākshasas*, those demons who trouble the world with their evil ways. He is grown so powerful that he takes for himself sacrifices that are meant for us, and even Agni and Vāyu must do his will if he so bids them. Good Brahmā, deliver us from the power of Rāvana and grant that he may be destroyed."

Four-faced Brahmā answered him. "Long ago I gave

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
Rāvana my blessing and swore that never could he be harmed by gods, by spirits, or by *rākshasas*. I cannot take back a gift which I have once given."

Despairing, the gods turned to Vishnu and implored his aid. Dark Vishnu, yellow-clad and holding a lotus-flower, smiled and answered them. "Though by gods and by spirits and by *rākshasas* Rāvana may not be harmed, by men and by animals he may be destroyed. I say to you that there will be born on earth a man whose name will be Rāma, and he will slay Rāvana, and break his power for ever. My spirit shall be with him, and he will not fail in his great work. I, Vishnu, have promised."

And the gods were comforted by the words of the Preserver, and waited with hope for Rāma's birth.

In northern India, in the kingdom of Koshala, ruled the great King Dasharatha. He ruled well and wisely, and under him his kingdom prospered and his people were happy and righteous. Dasharatha had his palace in the chief city of his land, the lovely city of Ayodhyā, and there could have been few cities to match it in all the world. Its streets were wide and its buildings beautiful: spacious houses and temples which reached up to the sky, gleaming in the sunlight.

But the loveliest building of all was Dasharatha's palace, with its cool gardens, where he might walk, shaded from the heat of the sun, in the jasmine-scented air, beside pools where the rosy lotus opened its petals; whilst the gay-coloured parrots flew from flowering tree to flowering tree, and the peacocks cried harshly from the marble terraces. To one passing through the palace, each room seemed more lovely than the last, with carved doorways and tall pillars, and furniture of gold and ivory. Here, in this palace, Dasharatha lived with his three queens:

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Kaushalyā, who was the foremost; Sumitrā, who was the gentlest; and Kaikeyī, who was the most beautiful.

But, in spite of all his wealth and power, and in spite of the love his subjects had for him, King Dasharatha was not happy, for he had no son. He prayed to the gods and made sacrifice to them, but it seemed as though they did not hear him; until at last he determined to make the greatest offering of all, the horse sacrifice, to see if that might not prevail. The finest horse in all the land was chosen, pure black, with flowing mane and tail, and on the night of the full moon it was set free to wander where it would; and, followed by a priest, it went through the gates of Ayodhyā and passed from sight.

When a year was gone the horse returned of its own will, to the great joy of Dasharatha and all his people. "It is a good omen," said the king, and preparations were made for the sacrifice on the banks of the river which ran by the city. And there, while the priests chanted, Kaushalyā, as the foremost of the queens, slew the black horse with the sacred scimitar, and offerings were made to each one of the gods. And in the flames of the fire that burnt upon the altar Vishnu appeared to Dasharatha, and giving to him a dish of rice, bade him share it among his wives. This Dasharatha did, dividing it into four portions and giving one portion to Kaushalyā, another to Kaikeyī, and the two last portions to Sumitrā. In time four sons were born to King Dasharatha. Rāma, the eldest, was the son of Queen Kaushalya; Bharata was the son of Queen Kaikeyī; while Queen Sumitrā was the mother of the twins, Lakshmana and Satrughna.

When Rāma was no more than a few months old, one evening as he lay in his cradle, he looked up, and saw the full moon rising like a great golden ball in the dark-blue sky. With delight he stretched out his little arms to it that

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
he might play with it, but when he found it beyond his reach he began to weep and cry.

Queen Kaushalyā and his nurses gathered round to comfort him, yet still he cried.

"He is hungry," said one of the women: but Rāma would not drink.

"Sāstī is angered; we must make her an offering," declared another. Sacrifices were made, and prayers said to the goddess, Sāstī, who cares for mothers and children: yet still Rāma cried.

"Perhaps a *rākshasa* or some evil spirit has frightened him," said a third; and hymns were chanted to keep all evil things away. But Rāma never ceased to cry, and his nurses were distraught.

His mother gave him her jewels to play with; but Rāma flung them all from him, for they were not the moon. In despair Kaushalyā sent for King Dasharatha, but Dasharatha himself could do nothing to calm his son. At last he sent for his chief counsellor. "Tell me," he said, "what ails my son?"

The wise old man looked at the crying child, and watched him stretching out his little arms in vain, then he looked up at the sky. "Let some one fetch a mirror," he said.

A little mirror was brought to him, and he put it into Rāma's hands. In its shining silver surface the moon was reflected, bright and golden. At once Rāma's crying ceased, and he smiled happily and with content, for he held the moon in his hands at last.

Of the four young princes, Rāma was the most beautiful, and he soon grew to be the wisest and the most accomplished of them, and in all the kingdom there was no youth like him for courtesy and gentleness and courage. From childhood Bharata and Satrughna had found great

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

pleasure in each other's company, but Lakshmana was only happy when he was with Rāma, whom he loved above all others in the world, and he would never be parted from him, following him always as though he were his shadow; and Rāma, for his part, loved his brother, Lakshmana, in return.

When Rāma was sixteen years old a certain *rishi*, a hermit who was renowned for his holy life—named Vishvāmitra—came to Ayodhyā to ask a boon of King Dasharatha. "Great king," he said, "in my hermitage can I and my companions offer no sacrifices to the gods, for we are continually set upon by the *rākshasas*, who steal our offerings and disturb the peace of our sanctuary. Let your son Rāma come with me to fight against these *rākshasas*, and they will trouble us no more."

Dasharatha was unwilling to send Rāma forth against the *rākshasas*, who were horrible man-eating demons with magic powers, when he was yet so young, but he wished to show all honour to such a worthy *rishi*, and after he had considered well he gave his consent; and Rāma accompanied by Lakshmana, both bright with jewels and carrying their swords and bows, went eagerly with Vishvāmitra to his hermitage.

The hermitage lay in a woodland grove, and there Rāma and Lakshmana were welcomed by the other wise and holy *rishis* who dwelt with Vishvāmitra.

"May you free us from the menace of the *rākshasas*," they said.

"With the help of the gods," said Rāma and Lakshmana, "we shall."

After six days were passed Vishvāmitra and his companions prepared to offer up a sacrifice to the gods. As soon as they were all gathered together, chanting their holy songs about the altar, a band of *rākshasas* rushed

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

upon them, screeching and yelling most terribly, and putting fear into all hearts. They were most hideous creatures, many-armed and many-headed, and they were led by crafty and cunning Mārīcha. Of all there, Rāma and Lakshmana alone were undaunted, and took up their weapons to fight. With his first well-aimed arrow Rāma struck Mārīcha, and the evil monster was lifted high into the air, and carried by the flight of the arrow over land and far across the sea, sorely wounded. Then, together, Rāma and Lakshmana fought with the other *rākshasas* and slew them all, so that the holy men rejoiced.

"Truly, you are blessed by the gods, Rāma," they said, as they crowded round to honour him.

But Rāma only smiled and asked Vishvāmitra, who had sought his aid, "Is there any other thing that you would have me do, now that this which you asked of me is done?"

And the *rishi* answered, "In the kingdom of Mithila the good King Janaka keeps the mighty bow of Shiva, which can be bent and broken by neither gods nor men. He has offered the hand of his daughter Sītā to anyone who breaks the bow. Come with me and try your strength on the mighty bow of Shiva."

So Rāma and Lakshmana travelled with Vishvāmitra to the kingdom of Mithila, and on the way he told them many tales of the gods, and they heard his wisdom eagerly.

This is one of the tales which Vishvāmitra, the *rishi*, told to Rāma and Lakshmana as they journeyed to Mithila. It is of the birth of the sacred river Gangā, the Ganges.

There was once a king named Sagara who ruled in Ayodhyā, and he had sixty thousand and one sons. The sixty thousand were dutiful, but the one was wicked and evil, and he was banished by his father. Yet he left behind

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

him in Ayodhyā a young son, Sumān, who was good and kindly and well loved by his grandfather, Sagara.

On a certain day King Sagara desired to perform a horse sacrifice. A fine horse was chosen and turned loose, to go where it would; but a *rākshasi* stole the horse away, that the king might not complete his sacrifice. Therefore Sagara sent forth his sixty thousand sons, commanding them to search the whole world, above and below the earth, until they had found the horse, and to bring it back to him.

They went about the world for many years, and found no sign of the horse. "Let us dig below the earth, for perchance it is hidden there," they said. And they delved and dug their way below the earth, tearing it apart and causing great destruction, so that Brahmā, the Creator, was displeased.

Right underneath the earth they burrowed, until in time they came in the east, below the ground, to a mighty elephant, bearing the eastern corner of the world upon his head. They worshipped him and he greeted them, and they continued on their way. In the south, below the ground, they came to another elephant, bearing the southern corner of the world upon his head. They worshipped him and he greeted them, and they continued on their way. In the west, under the ground, they came to a third elephant, bearing the western corner of the world upon his head. They worshipped him and he greeted them, and they continued on their way. In the north, under the ground, they came to yet another mighty elephant, as white as the snows of the north, and he bore the northern corner of the world upon his head. They worshipped him and he greeted them, and they continued on their way.

And so at last they came to a place where they saw a holy *rishi* sitting, and beside him, grazing peacefully, was

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

the horse they sought. They did not pause to consider, but crying out, "Here is the thief who has stolen our father's horse—let us slay him," they ran forward that they might trample down the *rishi* beneath their feet.

But, as they would have known had they been less eager, the *rishi* was no *rishi*, but Vishnu, the Preserver, himself; and as they ran forward a mighty flame flashed out upon them, and they were utterly burnt away. And all that remained of the sixty thousand sons of King Sagara was a heap of ashes.

When his sons returned not home Sagara sent for his grandson, Sumān. "Go forth and bring me tidings of your uncles," he commanded, and young Sumān set out.

All above the earth he went, and then below the earth, and there he came in turn upon the four elephants, and he worshipped them and they greeted him, and then at last he came upon the heap of ashes that was his uncles, and saw the horse near by; but the *rishi* that was no *rishi* was gone. Sumān wept for the fate of his uncles, and he wished to perform funeral rites for them, as was fitting; but in all that place beneath the earth he could find no water to sprinkle on their charred bones.

While he was despairing Garuda, half giant and half bird, the divine steed of Vishnu, the Preserver, flew by and spoke to him.

"Your uncles were slain by Vishnu himself, therefore it is in vain that you offer for them any ordinary rites. The waters of Gangā, the daughter of the mountain Himālaya, alone will suffice to wash away their sins. Not until the sacred waters of Gangā flow over their ashes will your uncles enter the heaven of the gods."

Sadly Sumān led the horse back to his grandfather, who made his sacrifice at last; but no one of all to whom Sumān told the words of Garuda knew how Gangā, who dwelt

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

high in the mountain Himālaya, might be persuaded to flow down into the hidden places of the earth.

Years passed and years passed, and King Sagara was dead and his grandson also, and a king sat upon the throne of Ayodhyā, who, by his goodly life, so pleased Brahmā, the Creator, that he offered him a boon. "Choose what you will," he said.

"Let the waters of Gangā, daughter of the mountain Himālaya, wash the ashes of the sixty thousand sons of Sagara that they may reach heaven," begged the king.

"It shall be so," said Brahmā. "But the fall of the waters of Gangā upon the earth will be so great that the earth will not be able to support them, and it will be utterly destroyed, save with the help of Shiva."

So the king prayed for a whole year to Shiva, and Shiva was glad of his devotion, and promised to break the fall of the waters of Gangā by receiving them upon his head.

And Gangā, the daughter of the mountain Himālaya, rejoiced in her pride, thinking, My mighty torrent will sweep away Shiva himself as I fall, and he will be no more. And she rushed down from the mountain upon his head, bent on washing him away.

But Shiva caught her in his hair, and there, in punishment for her presumption, he held her prisoned for many years, until at last he released her, and she flowed in seven streams throughout all India to where she reached the sea. Then, plunging into the depths of the ocean, she sank below the earth to the hidden place where lay the ashes of Sagara's sons. And when her sacred waters touched the ashes their sins were washed away, and the spirits of the sixty thousand sons rose up at last to the heaven of the gods. And that is how the sacred river Ganges was born.

. . . .

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

In Mithila King Janaka welcomed the strangers and asked Vishvāmitra who the two youths might be, and the *rishi* told him of how they had slain the *rākshasas* who troubled the peace of his hermitage. "Rāma," he said, "is the eldest son of King Dasharatha, and he is come to Mithila that he may see the bow of Shiva."

"Willingly shall I show it to so comely and so courageous a youth," said Janaka; and he ordered the great bow to be brought.

His strongest warriors dragged in an eight-wheeled iron chariot on which the bow was laid, and it was truly a mighty weapon, well worthy of Shiva, the Destroyer, to whom it had once belonged.

"This bow," said Janaka, "was given by Shiva to the other gods, and they in their turn gave it to an ancestor of mine, and my family has treasured it ever since. Yet so mighty is the bow that no man may bend and string it, though many kings and princes have tried. I have a daughter, Sītā, the fairest maiden of any, and I shall give her as a wife to the man who bends and breaks this bow."

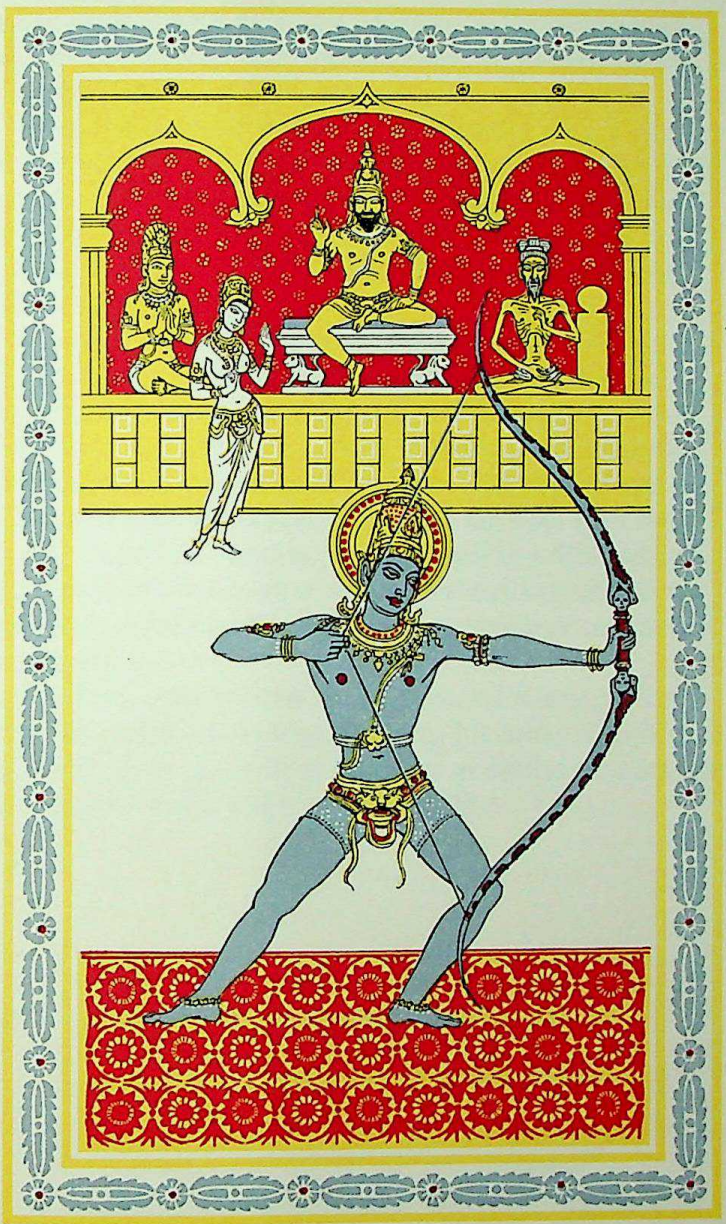
"Most noble king, might I try my skill?" asked Rāma eagerly.

"Willingly," replied Janaka.

Rāma drew the bow from its case and took it up, and there, while all watched him, he bent it easily to string it. Then, with all his strength, he bent it yet further until it broke in two, with a sound like thunder; and at the noise those gathered there fell to the floor and hid their faces, all save King Janaka, Vishvāmitra, the *rishi*, Lakshmana, and Rāma himself.

"Truly," said Janaka wonderingly, "though you are young, you are the mightiest warrior of all, and it is with joy that I shall give you my lovely Sītā, for you well deserve so unmatched a bride." And he gave orders for the

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

preparations for the marriage, and sent to Dasharatha asking for his consent and bidding him be present at the wedding feast.

When Dasharatha was come to Mithila, with a great train of elephants and chariots and with many gifts for his host, the two kings greeted each other joyfully, and Dasharatha was pleased to hear how well his son had acquitted himself, both in the slaying of the *rākshasas* and the breaking of the bow.

When all was ready for the wedding the fire was lighted on the flower-garlanded altar in honour of Agni, the god of fire, the sacred songs were chanted, and Sītā was led forth, and Rāma took her hand. And, indeed, Janaka had not lied, for, like a slim and graceful lotus, with the soft eyes of a deer and night-black hair, Sītā could not have been more lovely. Together, hand in hand, Rāma and Sītā walked three times about the altar with its lighted fire, and about the king and the *rishis*, and the long marriage ceremony was begun.

When the days of festivity were passed Rāma returned with his father to Ayodhyā, taking his bride with him. And Sītā showed herself as fond and as dutiful as she was lovely, and no man had ever a truer wife.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

2

The Banishment

For several years Rāma lived in Ayodhyā, in a palace of his own, joining in his father's councils or leading his father's army to war when he was bidden, and in all things he proved a loving and obedient son.

One day King Dasharatha called together his lords and counsellors and the chief men of his kingdom, and spoke to them. "For long," he said, "have I sought to rule this land in wisdom and with justice, that you, my people, might be happy. Now I am growing old, and I would pass the last few years of my life in quiet and contemplation while another rules my kingdom for me. You know the virtues and merits of Rāma, my eldest son. You have watched him in battle and heard him in the council. How say you, will you have Rāma for heir and regent?"

And with one voice they approved and answered him, "We would have Rāma for regent, and see him sit upon the throne. We would have him called your heir, and see him ride through the city streets upon the royal elephant, beneath the shade of the king's white umbrella."

But Dasharatha would not have their approval given idly and without thought. "Tell me," he asked, "why would you have Rāma, rather than any other?"

"Because," they answered him, "though he is young, he is wise; and because he is brave and generous, loyal in duty, unswerving in truth, and because he is kind and

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

gentle in time of peace; yet never in time of battle, for all his youth, has he failed to conquer our enemies. And, above all, because he is much beloved by all the people."

Old King Dasharatha smiled, for he saw that they valued Rāma for his worth, and not merely because he was the eldest son of their king, whom they would have sought to please by doing him honour.

King Dasharatha sent for Rāma. "On a day which I shall choose, my son," he said, "you shall be named as heir and regent, for such is my will and the will of the people." And Rāma knelt before his father and bowed his head. "It shall be as you say," he answered.

But to Lakshmana Rāma said, "It shall be your day of joy no less than mine, for you shall help me rule with your good counsel and your friendship." And Lakshmana, proud and happy, bowed himself before his brother.

Dasharatha at once gave orders for all things to be made ready for Rāma to be advanced as heir and regent of the land, and as soon as the people of Ayodhyā heard the tidings there was great rejoicing everywhere. The streets were decked with garlands of bright flowers, and throngs of happy men passed by, laughing and cheering and calling down the blessing of the gods on their young prince.

When she heard the news Queen Kaushalyā, Rāma's mother, was the happiest of all, and to those who brought her the good tidings she gave gifts of jewels and cattle. And Queen Kaikeyī and Queen Sumitrā rejoiced no less than any others, for they, too, loved Rāma. And of all Dasharatha's family, only Bharata and Satrughna could not rejoice, for they were away from the kingdom, travelling in the land of Queen Kaikeyī's kinsfolk.

On the last night before the ceremony of his naming as heir and regent Rāma went with Sītā to keep vigil in the

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

palace temple, invoking the gods on behalf of his new honour; and all who loved him offered up their prayers for him.

But in Ayodhyā there was one, and only one, who did not rejoice nor pray, and that was Mantharā, Queen Kaikeyī's old nurse, who had come with her from her own land when she married King Dasharatha. This Mantharā was a hunchback, crafty and ugly, and because she loved her mistress above all other things, she was jealous, for her sake, that Kaikeyī's son, Bharata, had not been chosen heir and regent instead of Rāma. She hurried to where Kaikeyī lay on a silk-strewn couch upon the palace roof, in the cool of the evening, idly watching where the people hurried by, calling gaily to each other in their joy at Rāma's coming exaltation.

Mantharā flung herself at Kaikeyī's feet and clasped them. "Alas, dear mistress," she cried, "that such a grief should come on you. You, whom I have loved and nursed as a babe. Good queen, how can you lie here idle and laughing when such a thing has come to pass?"

Startled, Kaikeyī sat upright on the couch. "What do you mean, Mantharā? What has happened? Tell me."

"How you are deceived, my mistress," wailed Mantharā. "To-morrow the king will appoint Rāma his heir and regent, while princely Bharata, your own son, is cast aside and forgotten."

But Kaikeyī clasped her hands in joy. "Foolish Mantharā, why do you come with tears and groans to bring me such good tidings? Rāma is as dear to me as my own son, Bharata, and I rejoiced in the honour that is to be done to him, as would Bharata have done had he been here. I am glad that it is to-morrow that Rāma is to be proclaimed. All good fortune be to him in his high office. See, here is a gift for the bearer of such good news." And

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

she took a jewelled bracelet from about her slender arm, and gave it to the old nurse.

But Mantharā flung the bracelet from her and grew angry. "You must be out of your mind to be glad at this disaster. When the king is dead and Rāma is in his place you will be no more than Queen Kaushalyā's slave, to run here and there at the bidding of Sītā, and Bharata, your son, will be his brother's servant."

"Rāma loves Bharata," said Kaikeyī. "When he is king he will share his power with my son. They will be brothers and good friends in all things, as they have ever been. Why, Rāma honours me as he honours his own mother."

Mantharā leant forward and spoke quietly. "Power, good mistress, can often change a heart for ill. When Rāma is king what may he not do? From Queen Sumitrā's twins, his youngest brothers, he will fear nothing, for Satrughna would never set himself above your Bharata, and Lakshmana cares for nothing save to serve his brother, Rāma. But Bharata is the next in age to Rāma, and Rāma will fear his envy, and seek to be the first to strike a blow. He will banish Bharata for the safety of his own power, or he may even slay him. Good mistress, even if you care not for your own high position, consider the life of Bharata your son."

"Rāma loves all his brothers, he would not harm them," protested Kaikeyī.

Mantharā laughed bitterly. "Why is Bharata not here when Rāma is proclaimed heir and regent? Why should it be, but that Rāma fears his envy?"

"Bharata visits his uncle, my brother, in our own country, you know that."

"His visit was well timed for Rāma's purpose," scoffed Mantharā. She grasped Kaikeyī's hand and spoke harshly.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

"Why will you not listen to me, mistress? Heed my words and save your son."

And though for long Kaikeyī would not hear her, at last the foolish queen believed, and grew afraid. "Oh, Mantharā, what will become of us, Bharata, you, and I? Tell me what I should do." And she wept.

Mantharā smiled and put her arms about her mistress, while her voice grew soft and gentle, once all her scorn and anger were past. "My little one, do you remember how, many years ago, King Dasharatha fought against the *rākshasas* at the call of Indra, our lord of the sky, and how, when he lay near dying of his wounds upon the field of battle, you sought him out and took him to a place of safety, and tended him until he was whole again?"

"Well do I remember it," sobbed Kaikeyī. "He was grateful to me then. At that time he would not have cast me aside nor rejected my son as he has done to-day."

"He promised you—you have forgotten, my little one? —to grant you any two boons you cared to ask of him. Do you remember, Kaikeyī?"

"I remember. And I remember that I answered him that I would ask the boons when I had need of them."

Mantharā laughed in triumph. "You have need of them now, mistress. You can yet save Bharata and yourself."

Kaikeyī looked up at her, her tears forgotten. "Tell me what I must do," she whispered.

"Go to the room of mourning, and wait until the king comes to you. When he asks what ails you remind him of his promise. He will swear to do whatever you ask; and then, when he has sworn, demand that Bharata is named heir and regent in Rāma's place, and that Rāma is banished to the jungle for fourteen years. By the time that fourteen years are passed Bharata will be too much a king for even Rāma to work him any ill."

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

"I will do all that," said Kaikeyī.

"Then make haste, we have no time to lose." Mantharā pulled her up from the couch and hurried her down from the roof. "Our safety depends on you, good mistress. Our lives are in your hands," she urged her, in a fierce whisper, as they went.

Kaikeyī put off her jewels and her silken garments, and in a tattered robe, with loosened hair, she went to the room of mourning, a bare chamber set apart for those who sorrowed or who felt themselves offended. Later, when Dasharatha went to her apartments he did not find her, and asked of her servants where she might be, and they told him. Distressed and anxious, Dasharatha went to the room of mourning, where he found Kaikeyī lying upon the ground, weeping.

He raised her gently. "What ails you, my youngest queen? If there is some sickness come upon you I shall not rest until it is cured. If anyone has injured you, dry your eyes and smile again, for his fate is yours to decide."

Kaikeyī clung to him. "Many years past, my king, when I chanced to save your life you swore to grant me two boons. I would ask them of you now."

"Whatever you ask, my Kaikeyī, it shall be done. All my wealth and all my treasure are yours if you will. If there is any who has offended you, and whom you would destroy, tell me his name. If some lowly beggar has done you a service, and you would reward him, he shall be made a prince at your demand. Whatever you ask, you shall have, Kaikeyī. Before all the gods I give you my royal promise."

In her heart Kaikeyī smiled, for it had gone as Mantharā had declared it would. "You have promised, my king," she said. "All the gods have heard you, and the sun and the moon and every star in the sky have been

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

witness to your oath. Grant me now the two things I shall ask: Let my son, Bharata, be named heir and regent in the place of Rāma, and send Rāma into exile in the jungle for fourteen years. That is all I would ask of you, and you have promised to fulfil it."

King Dasharatha flung her from him as though he held a serpent in his arms. "Rāma has ever considered you a second mother," he cried. "How can you do this thing to him? I have loved you, Kaikeyī, and shown you great honour. Will you bring ruin and disgrace on me? Ask any other boons but those."

"Refuse me those things I ask, and which you have already promised to grant," said Kaikeyī, "and I shall take my own life."

Dasharatha's anger passed, and he wept. "I am an old man, Kaikeyī, and I have not many years to live. Do not take my best-loved son from me."

And though she pitied him, Kaikeyī's fears for the safety of Bharata were stronger than her pity, and she answered, "Break your oath if you dare, and let all the world know that King Dasharatha is a liar and forsworn, and let me die and never see your face again."

"Would that the darkness might drop down and cover me, and that I might perish at this moment," said Dasharatha. After a time he spoke again. "I will do as you ask, but you and your son I cast out from my heart for ever."

And Kaikeyī smiled, for she believed that she had won a throne for Bharata, her son, and saved his life.

When day dawned—that day when Rāma should have been installed as regent—with the first light of morning all the people of Ayodhyā gathered in the flower-decked streets to watch Rāma drive by to Dasharatha's palace. And early came Sumantra, Rāma's charioteer, to tell the

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

king that all was ready for the great ceremony. But on that most happy day he found the old king bowed with grief and silent, with Queen Kaikeyī at his side. "Bid Rāma come," she said, "for the king would speak with him."

Wondering, Sumantra hastened back to Rāma's palace and gave the king's command.

At the doorway of his home Rāma bade Sītā farewell. "When I have heard my father's will I shall return," he said.

"May the blessing of all the gods be with you, my husband," she said, and watched him proudly as he went.

In his chariot, driven by Sumantra, Rāma passed through the streets, and all the people hailed him and cried his name in joy, while from the roof-tops women flung flowers upon him and called down blessings on his name. When he was come to the palace of his father he drove through the great gates and through the three outer courtyards, then, alighting from the chariot, he walked through the two inner courts to the chamber of the king. There he left Lakshmana and his attendants, and entered alone.

There Dasharatha sat, weary and stricken, and Kaikeyī sat beside him. Rāma knelt before his father, and bowed, and touched his feet, and he did likewise to Kaikeyī; while Dasharatha wept and strove to speak, but could utter no more than the name of his best-loved son. "Oh, Rāma, Rāma . . ."

Distressed, Rāma turned to Kaikeyī. "Good second mother, tell me, why does my father weep? Have I displeased him in any way? Has some misfortune come to my brothers, Bharata and Satrughna, in their journeyings? Good second mother, tell me what ails the king."

"He has a command for you, Rāma," said Kaikeyī,

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

"but he fears to speak it lest you should not obey. He would have your promise first, before you know his will." Thus she spoke cunningly, that Rāma also might be bound by oaths and her purpose fulfilled easily.

"Whatever my father demands of me, it shall be done —even if it is to drink poison this very morning. I have sworn, and I have never yet broken my word."

"Many years ago," said Kaikeyī coldly, "the king promised me two boons for the saving of his life. To-day he grants them to me, though against his will. I have asked that my Bharata be proclaimed heir and regent in your place, and that you be banished to the jungle for fourteen years. If you honour your father you will go without protest and keep his pledge for him."

At her words Dasharatha turned his head away, and his tears flowed faster; but though his heart was heavy for his father's sorrow, for himself Rāma was unmoved. Quietly he answered Kaikeyī, "This very day will I leave Ayodhyā for the jungle, in fulfilment of my father's promise. But, good second mother, send soon for Bharata, and comfort my father in his grief when I am gone. And give me, first, time to bid farewell to my mother, Queen Kaushalyā, and to fair Sītā, my wife."

"As you will," said Kaikeyī, "but make haste, for I would see the king's promise kept with all speed."

Rāma knelt once more to Dasharatha and once more to Kaikeyī, then he rose and went from them.

Lakshmana was angry when he heard what had befallen, but Rāma calmly sought out his mother, Queen Kaushalyā. He found her in the temple making offerings to Vishnu, that with the Preserver's blessing her son might prosper as heir and regent. She greeted him with joy, but when he told her of Dasharatha's decree she sank to the ground and wept. "My child," she said, "if you had never

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

been born I should have grieved because I had no son, but this is an even greater sorrow that I must bear to-day. May Yama, lord of the dead, take me soon, for I, who have lived to see my son banished to the jungle, have lived too long." And she would not be comforted.

But Lakshmana said to Rāma, "Brother, the king, our father, does not know what an ill thing it is that he has done. It is not his demands but Queen Kaikeyī's that you would obey. The people love you, they will rise and fight for you, if you will but stay in Ayodhyā and resist this cruel command."

"Listen to your brother, Rāma," pleaded Kaushalyā. "Remain, and seize what should be your own."

But Rāma shook his head. "I must obey my father. I have given my word." And all their urging and entreaties could not alter his decision.

At last Kaushalyā said, "Then go, Rāma, but take me with you."

"My father is old and unhappy," said Rāma gently, "and he will hate Kaikeyī for what she has done to him. Dearest mother, would you leave him uncomforted? Stay here in the palace with him, to console his last few years, and pray for me to all the gods."

Kaushalyā ceased her weeping and grew calmer. "Go, my son, and may the gods keep you when you wander in the jungle, and may the trees and the flowers and the beasts of the forest and the birds that fly in the air guard you from all harm."

Then Rāma went to Sītā to bid her farewell, and now he could no longer hide his grief from others, so that seeing him thus, Sītā grew pale and fearful, and asked him what calamity had come on them. Rāma told her of Dasharatha's command. "I must leave you here, Sītā, and wander in the jungle for fourteen years, and it is hard for

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

me to part from you. Yet I would lay on you one last charge before I go: Love my brothers Bharata and Satrughna as though they were your own, honour Bharata, as heir and regent, in all things, and remember to speak no praise of me in his hearing. Now, farewell."

But Sītā drew herself up, slim and straight and proud, and looked at him. "Was it a prince spoke thus to his wife?" she asked. "I give no heed to such unbefitting words. It is a woman's place and a woman's duty and a woman's right to remain ever at her husband's side, whatever fortune the gods may send to him. If Rāma is banished Sītā is banished also. I shall go with you to the jungle, Rāma, to walk before you and clear the thorns from your path. Do not grieve for me that I too am sent into exile, for where you are, there is my happiness, and I would rather lie on the bare ground of the forest and know that you were close by me than on the silken couches of a palace when you were far away."

"Life will be hard in the jungle," warned Rāma. "There will be wild beasts to frighten you."

"If you are with me," replied Sītā, "I shall have no fear of them."

"There will be little food, and coarse. No more than berries and roots and herbs, such as the daughter of a king is unused to eat."

"I will gather them for you," said Sītā, "and we shall eat together."

"There may be *rākshasas*, demon-creatures, to do us harm."

"What *rākshasa* dare not be afraid of mighty Rāma?" she asked.

And so to all the doubts that Rāma uttered Sītā had her answer, and then she knelt before him and wept, until he said, "Then give your wealth to the priests for the

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

poor and for the temples, and make ready to come with me, for I see that you will not fear the dangers of the jungle."

And Sītā smiled through her tears and was glad.

But Lakshmana wept, and bowed low to Rāma's feet, and said, "I have ever followed you in all things, in danger have I ever stood at your side. Do not deny to me to go with you into the jungle, my brother. I shall hew down trees to build a house to shelter you; and while you and Sītā sit in the shade of the wide forest trees or bathe in the forest pools I shall hunt game and seek fruits for you to eat; and while you sleep I shall guard you. Take me with you to the jungle, Rāma."

"We have never been parted," said Rāma. "We shall not be parted now."

Then Rāma, Lakshmana, and Sītā went to the palace for the last time, to bid farewell to King Dasharatha and his queens. Some word of Rāma's going had already reached the people, and when they saw him pass they cried to him to stay with them; and some there were who said, "The king must be out of his mind, to send away his best-loved son," and others who cried, "If Rāma goes to the jungle let us follow him and leave an empty city for Bharata." But Rāma paid no heed to their words, and went on to the palace. There, as he stood before his father with Lakshmana and Sītā close beside him, Dasharatha said to him, "Kaikeyī has cheated and deceived me, and I shall never know another day of joy in all my life. It will soon be evening. Stay here with me and with your mother until dawn, that we may have your company for at least another night."

"Queen Kaikeyī bade me leave the city for the jungle this very day, and I gave her my word to go. When

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

fourteen years are passed we shall return to you, my father," replied Rāma.

"Then shall I send with you my army, the royal huntsmen, and as many servants as you could wish, that you may have, even in the jungle, a following and a home worthy of my eldest son," said Dasharatha; and all those of his counsellors who stood by spoke in agreement with his words. But Kaikeyī said, "Do you call that banishment? Rather would it be exile for my Bharata when he returned to rule over an empty city, bereft of its army and its wealth."

"I ask no soldiers more than my brother Lakshmana, and no friends more than him and Sītā, my wife. And what need have I of wealth in the jungle? Let such things be kept for Bharata, my brother, for they are his by decree of the king. I ask no more than raiment such as a hermit of the forest might wear, a spade to dig for the roots which we shall eat, and a basket to carry them in."

"You shall have what you ask," said Kaikeyī. And she commanded coarse garments woven of tree-bark to be brought for Rāma and Lakshmana and Sītā; and when they had been brought Rāma and Lakshmana put off their jewels and their royal robes, and clad themselves in such clothes as a poor hermit or a man who tilled the soil might wear. But Sītā, who had worn silk and precious ornaments all her life, wept a little, and hesitated. "Let Sītā remain in the palace, Rāma," said an aged counsellor. "The jungle is no fit place for one so gently reared as she."

But Dasharatha said, "Kaikeyī's demands are binding on Rāma alone. Sītā and Lakshmana may wear what garments they please, and take with them what jewels and comforts and servants they will." And he sent for Rāma's golden chariot, and Sumantra yoked the horses to it, while Rāma took a last farewell of his father and the three

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

queens. "If there is any here whom I have at any time offended," he said, "let him forgive me now."

Lakshmana bowed before his mother, Queen Sumitrā, and, through her tears, she smiled and said, "You have chosen well, my son, to go with your brother Rāma and not to leave him in his hour of grief. Ever guard him well and keep him safe. Let the jungle be for him another Ayodhyā, where he may dwell secure and honoured with his wife."

"Let Rāma, my son, be ever as a god to you," said Kaushalyā to Sītā. "Remain with him always."

With pride, Sītā answered her. "The brightness of the moon shall fade before I leave my Rāma. A stringed instrument can make no music when its strings are broken, a chariot may not move without its wheels, how shall a wife live who is parted from her lord?"

The weapons and the armour of Rāma and Lakshmana and Sītā's garments and jewels were laid in the golden chariot, along with the hoe and the basket for which Rāma had asked; and Rāma, Lakshmana, and Sītā entered into the chariot, and Sumantra urged on the horses through the city streets, while in anguish Dasharatha called to him to stay yet a moment longer, and Kaushalyā cried aloud, and ran a little way after the golden chariot.

"Drive on," said Rāma to Sumantra, "and heed neither the king nor the queen, my mother. Make all the haste you may, that I may be spared this agony." And he hid his face in his hands, and would not look back at those he loved.

The people of the city ran beside the chariot and clung to it, crying out to Rāma and calling down blessings on him; and so they went with him, right to the limits of the kingdom, where the river Tamasa flowed, and there on the river's bank they passed the night, Rāma, Lakshmana, Sītā, Sumantra, and all those people who had followed them from Ayodhyā, vowing to share Rāma's exile.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

In the morning Rāma roused Sītā and his brother and faithful Sumantra, saying, "I do not ask these good and loyal people to have part in my suffering. It is not fitting that they should. Bharata must be their rightful lord, and it is for them to return to Ayodhyā, not to go to the jungle with me. Let us steal away while they yet sleep, so that they can follow me no farther."

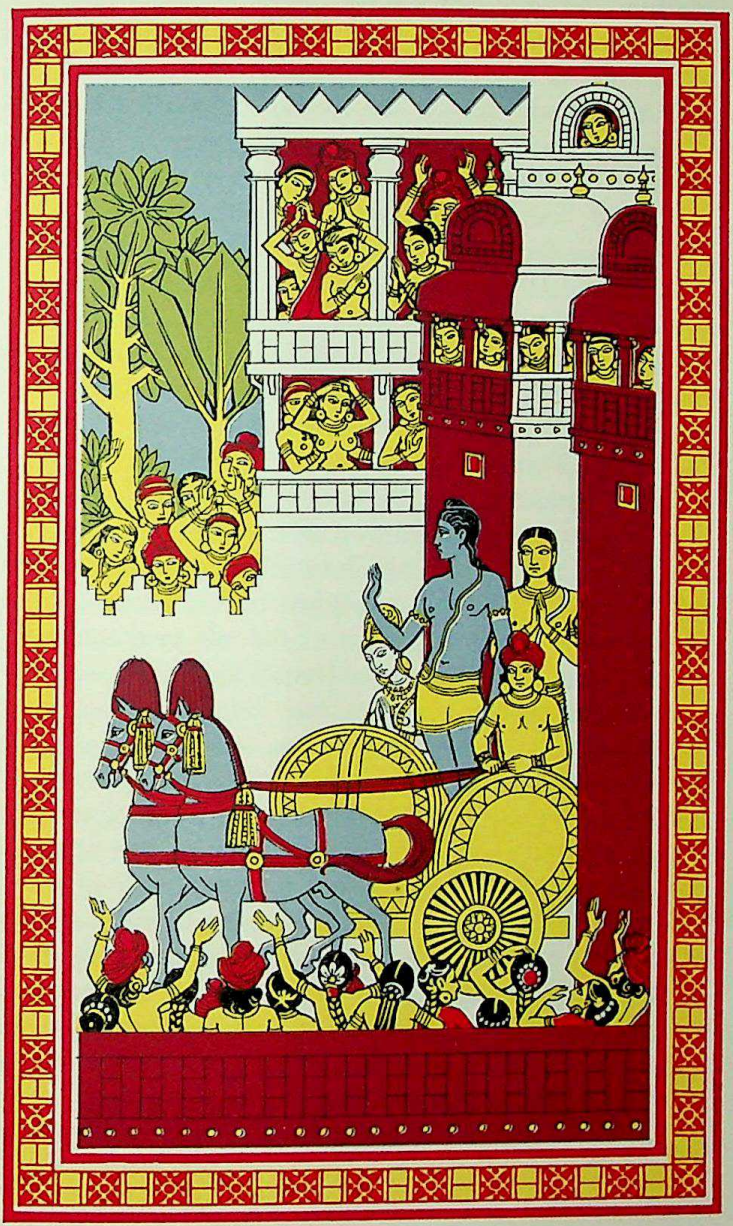
So, while the people slept, wearied by their journey of the day before, Sumantra yoked the horses to the chariot, and drove away; and, crossing the Tamasa, they went southward towards the sacred river Gangā. And when the people awoke and found that Rāma was gone from them they wept and made their way back to Ayodhyā.

On the banks of Gangā, of whose birth Vishvāmitra, the *rishi*, had told Rāma and Lakshmana, Rāma was welcomed by King Guha, who ruled over the wild Nishādas who dwelt there; then, bidding farewell to Sumantra, Rāma bade him return to Ayodhyā. And, though he was loath to go, the faithful charioteer drove away alone, heavy at heart at parting with his master.

King Guha ordered his warriors to ferry Rāma and Lakshmana and Sītā over the wide river, and while they crossed Sītā prayed to Gangā. "Grant that my Rāma may return safely to Ayodhyā when the fourteen long years of exile are passed, and I will make great offerings to you of cattle and gold. Mighty goddess, hear my request."

On the farther bank they bade farewell to the kindly Nishādas, and watched them row back across the water to their king; and there, beside the sacred Gangā, Rāma and Lakshmana swore to protect each other and Sītā always, whatever befell them. Then they remembered Ayodhyā, and Rāma wept. "I should have left you to care for my mother, Queen Kaushalyā," he said. "I did ill to let you come with me."

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

But Lakshmana said, "Would you have Sītā and me both lose our courage and grieve with you? Forget your grief that we may all smile together. And as for leaving me in Ayodhyā, I could not live without you, Rāma. I do not wish to see my father, Dasharatha, nor my brother, Satrughna, nor my mother, Queen Sumitrā, nor even the heaven of the gods, unless you are by my side." And Rāma was comforted by his brother's love, and rejoiced that he had indeed allowed Lakshmana to come with him.

The three of them wandered through the jungle, south of the river Gangā, Lakshmana going first to clear a path through the brushwood and the creepers, and Sītā following after him, where she would be well protected, with Rāma last, to see that no harm came to her. They walked on through the jungle, and to Sītā all was strange and new, for she had never seen such things before as the tall trees where strange birds chattered and the high bamboos where wild creatures lurked and the many-coloured flowers that grew nowhere else but in the jungle. And often as they went she would ask Rāma the name of some bright flower that had delighted her, while Lakshmana plucked branches of blossom and scented sprays for her; and the two brothers rejoiced in her pleasure at all she saw, so that the jungle seemed to them to be less a place of exile than it would have been without her company.

In the jungle they met with *rishis*, holy men who had chosen a life of solitude and contemplation, who greeted them with courtesy and kindness, and heard their story; and there, too, they met with Vālmīki, the poet, who in after years wrote the tale of Rāma and Sītā and all that had befallen them. And in Vālmīki's hermitage, beside the mountain of Chitrakuta, they remained for many days, in peace and gentle contentment.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

3

Sītā Lost

But in Ayodhyā King Dasharatha, bent and aged with grief, grew sick, and he knew that he was dying. Kaushalyā sat beside his couch and tried to comfort him, but he would not be comforted. As happens at such times, his mind wandered back to the days of his youth, and, in a voice which had grown weak, he said, "When I was young I was held in great honour for my skill at shooting with the bow. So skilled was I that I could shoot by sound alone. I had no need to see my quarry, I could judge just where it stood and how near it was to me by the snap of a twig beneath its feet or a chirp or a growl that it gave. I was then the heir and regent of my father, just as Rāma should be mine, while you, Kaushalyā, lived in your father's palace, and we were not yet betrothed. One evening, as night was coming on, I was hunting by the river in the twilight, when I heard the water ripple a short distance away. Thinking it to be a deer or even, perhaps, a tiger, which had come to the river's bank in the dusk to drink, I fitted an arrow to my bow and shot. But it was no beast at which I aimed, for it was a human cry which told me that my arrow had reached its mark. I hurried to the water's edge, and there I found a youth, dying, with beside him the pitcher he had come to fill. 'How have I offended you, lord,' he asked me, 'that you should take my life? I beg you, go to my parents, and tell them that I can no longer care for them. And, in your mercy, see that they are not left desolate and unprotected, for my

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

father is blind.' And with that he died. I filled the pitcher, and found the hovel where they lived, and the blind father, hearing me come, believed me his son and greeted me cheerfully. And it was as hard a thing as any man has ever had to do, to tell him who I was and how I had slain the youth. I have never forgotten the words he said to me. 'For a father to mourn for a son is a bitter grief, lord. One day you, also, may know that grief.' I have never forgotten his words, Kaushalyā, and to-day they are true, for I also mourn a son." He fell silent for a time, and then he said, "Kaikeyī, you have brought all this sorrow on me and mine. My death is your deed." He stretched out his hands, and in his feeble grasp he took the hands of Kaushalyā and Sumitrā. "May the gods bless and keep you, Kaushalyā and Sumitrā, my two good wives. And may they bless and keep Rāma, my son, and his brothers, Lakshmana and Satrughna." After a while he sighed and said, "Most fortunate of all people will they be who live to see Rāma and Lakshmana and Sītā return to Ayodhyā." Then King Dasharatha closed his eyes and died.

When his counsellors learnt of Dasharatha's death they debated together what it were best to do. "For the land cannot be without a king," they said. "A kingdom without a king to guide it is a herd of cattle with no herdsman." And at last, after much pondering, they decided to send a messenger to the land of Queen Kaikeyī's kinsmen to bid Bharata hasten home. But they forbade the messenger to tell the young prince of his father's death and his brother's exile, for they wished to see for themselves how he received the news.

As soon as he heard the bidding of the messenger Bharata took leave of his uncles and his grandfather, and, with Satrughna, set off for Koshala with all the speed he might. "I am afraid at this summons," he said to his

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

brother. "May the gods grant that all is well in Ayodhyā."

When he arrived in the city at sunrise, on the seventh day of his journey, he saw the streets deserted, with no sign of the gay city life that was wont to fill them in the early hours, before the noonday heat, and he entered the palace with foreboding.

He went at once with Satrughna to his father's chamber, but it was empty and deserted, so he hastened to his mother, Kaikeyī, and knelt before her. Overjoyed at his return, she embraced him, and asked him of his journey and of his uncles and his grandfather; and when he had answered her questions Bharata said, "Where is my father, the king? I sought him but I did not find him. Is he with Queen Kaushalyā?"

"Your father is dead," said Kaikeyī. Yet she did not weep when she spoke the words, for her heart was too filled with the joy of all she had won for her son to have any room left for sorrow.

But Bharata wept and grieved for his father. "How fortunate were those who were with him when he died, that they might perform for him all the rites for the newly dead. I would that I had been here with my brothers. Tell me, mother, what were his last words?"

"They were of no importance, my son," she said. But, because Bharata begged her, she told him. "He said no more than, 'Most fortunate of all people will they be who live to see Rāma and Lakshmana and Sītā return to Ayodhyā.'"

"What could he have meant by those words?" asked Bharata, wondering. "But, mother, tell me, where is Rāma? For he is my father's first-born, and he is now my king, and I would go to kneel at his feet, and offer him my service."

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

"Rāma is banished to the jungle, and Lakshmana and Sītā are gone with him, and it is you who are king," answered Kaikeyī. And she told him all the story of how she had won him the kingdom, smiling, as she spoke, with pride and joy, awaiting his approval and thanks. But Bharata heard her with horror, and when her tale was done he drew away from her, and stared at her.

"Would that my father had never wed with you and never seen your face," he said. "It is you alone who have killed him, and now you would destroy his sons. How little did you know of my great love for Rāma when you acted thus. Were it not that Rāma himself has ever loved and honoured you I would cast you forth from this kingdom that you have stolen for me, though you are my own mother. I will not have the kingdom: I am not fit to rule it. I shall call back Rāma from the jungle, and implore his pardon for the evil that has been done for my advantage, and I shall serve him all my life. But I wish never to set eyes on you again, or on your hated Mantharā, who brought all this to pass with her spite and envy."

"As for Mantharā," said Satrughna furiously, "she may die." And he went to where the hunchbacked old nurse stood, and flung her to the ground, while Kaikeyī fled in terror.

But Bharata said, "Do not kill her, for she is a woman. It is not a deed that Rāma would do if he stood where we stand to-day. He would be angry with us if we harmed this wretched creature or my misguided mother."

So Satrughna let Mantharā go, and turned to Bharata. "Oh, my brother," he said, "could anything more sorrowful than this have befallen us?"

And while they mourned together Queen Kaushalyā came to them. She looked long in silence at Bharata and her eyes were hard. "Is your ambition now satis-

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

fied?" she asked at last. "Has your mother not served you well?"

But Bharata fell at her feet, and protested his love for Rāma. "I will not have the kingdom," he cried. "Good Queen Kaushalyā, come with me to the jungle, and we will seek out Rāma together, and bid him return to rule Koshala."

When Kaushalyā saw how Bharata was loyal to his elder brother she wept and embraced him, and besought his pardon for having doubted him. "I thought that Kaikeyī had planned all her deeds with you," she said. "I did not know that you were ignorant of her designs."

When the days of mourning for King Dasharatha had been observed Bharata called together soldiers and lords that he might go forth to the jungle to seek for Rāma, and with a great train of chariots and elephants he set out, accompanied by Queen Kaushalyā and Queen Sumitrā, the dead king's chief counsellors, and the highest priests of the land.

This great cavalcade came to the country of King Guha and his wild tribesmen on the banks of the river Gangā, and, crossing over, it came at last to the mountain of Chitrakuta, where Rāma dwelt near to Vālmīki's hermitage. Here, in a little hut, Bharata and his companions found Rāma, clad in skins and garments of tree-bark, sitting upon a deer-skin that had been laid upon the floor. By his side sat Sītā, while Lakshmana stood beside them, and upon the walls of the hut hung the bows and quivers and other weapons of the princes.

When Bharata saw his brother thus, whom he had last seen wearing jewels in a royal palace, attended by servants and great nobles, he wept, and, with Satrughna, he knelt

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

before him. "Lord," he said, and could speak no more for his tears.

But Rāma raised him from the ground and embraced him. "I am glad indeed to look upon you once again, my brother. Tell me, how fares our father? And my mother, Queen Kaushalyā, does she still grieve that I am gone from Ayodhyā? And good Queen Sumitrā, does she weep for Lakshmana? And, Bharata, your own mother, Queen Kaikeyī, the loveliest of all, does she care well for you, and hearten you in your great office?"

At Rāma's kindness and his gentle words and his thoughts even for Kaikeyī who had caused him so much grief, Bharata only wept the more. "Our father is dead," he said, "and it was my mother caused his death by her ambition. Too late she has repented it, for all her tears cannot bring him back to life again. But you, my eldest brother, may a little ease our sorrow. Come now and rule Koshala, for I will never be king while you still live."

"How can I return to Ayodhyā," asked Rāma, "when it was my father's command that I should be banished to the jungle? I may not break an oath my father swore, no matter who may wish it. Fourteen years must I remain in the jungle, before I return to Ayodhyā."

"Let me remain in the jungle in your place," pleaded Bharata, "while you rule our father's kingdom. Thus may the exile be fulfilled."

"It was I who was banished, not you, my brother," said Rāma gently, "though I thank you for your love. The kingdom must be yours, as your mother wished and our father promised."

"If the kingdom is mine," said Bharata, "it is mine to give to whom I please. I give it to you, whose it should have been."

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

"I may not take it," said Rāma. "It is for me to remain in the jungle, not to rule in Ayodhyā."

Then his mother came, and Queen Sumitrā, and they pleaded with him to return with them; but to all their entreaties Rāma only said, "I will not break the promise I made to my father. I must remain in the jungle. Do not weep. And, I beg of you, if you would please me let none of you have hatred for lovely Queen Kaikeyī. That is the request of both Sītā and myself."

At last, when they saw that he would not be moved by their pleading or their arguments, Bharata said, "Then, my brother, give me at least the sandals from your feet, that I may lay them on the throne, and rule the kingdom in your name, till you return to Ayodhyā. And until the fourteen years are passed I shall live in Ayodhyā as a hermit, neither wearing royal garments nor enjoying any luxury, even as you must endure the life of a hermit in the jungle. And when the fourteen years are passed, if you do not come, then shall I build for myself a mighty pyre, and perish in its flames."

So Rāma gave his sandals to Bharata, who knelt down before them and honoured them, and had them set upon the huge royal elephant, with its gilded tusks and jewelled trappings, beneath the white state umbrella; and so, in sorrow, Bharata led away his great train that had set out with such high hope. And, back in Ayodhyā, he set Rāma's sandals on the throne to await Rāma's return from the jungle, while he himself ruled Koshala in his brother's name, laying aside his jewels and royal raiment, going in garments of tree-bark, with uncombed hair, and eating wild fruits and berries in the palace, where all other men wore the finest silks and feasted on the choicest foods.

When they were alone again in their little hut on Chit-

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

rakuta Rāma said to Lakshmana and Sītā, "This place is no longer a home of peace to me, for it reminds me too sorely of my brothers and my mother, who were here but now. Let us go and find another place to dwell in."

So once again they set forth and wandered farther southward, on and on through the dark forest of Dandaka, where the trees grew close together: aromatic teak, with grey-barked trunk, and the *pipal*, which is sacred to Shiva, rosewood, with its little shiny leaves, and mahogany, whose foliage flames crimson when it falls; until they reached the lovely woods of Panchāvati. And there, close by the river Godāvarī, where sweet flowering trees—the red *simal*, which sheds its branches, and the honey-scented *tun*—overhung the red-clay banks where the kingfishers flashed and the white and yellow wagtails tripped, Lakshmana built for them a house with four rooms. Its pillars were made from tree-trunks, its walls were bamboos lashed together with creepers, and its roof was a thatch of teak-leaves.

And there, in solitude and simple content, they dwelt for ten full years, with only the jungle for company, and the creatures that lived in it: timid graceful deer, wild pigs, the spiked porcupine, croaking tree-frogs, the chirruping grasshopper, and the many, many birds.

But Rāma was not fated to pass all the fourteen years of his exile in quiet and content, for one day there wandered through the woods of Panchāvati a *rākshasi*, a demon-woman, Surpanakhā, the sister of Rāvana, the king of the *rākshasas*, he who ruled on the island of Lankā, which is now called Ceylon, oppressing men and spiting the gods. This Surpanakhā was hideous and terrible to look upon, and evil, as were all her kind; but when she saw Rāma, young and handsome and brave, sitting with Sītā and

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

Lakshmana before their house, she wished him for her husband.

She could change her shape at will, so, taking the form of a beautiful young woman, she came to where Rāma talked and laughed with Sītā and Lakshmana, and stood before him. "Who are you," she asked, "who live in this forest with only these two for company?"

"I am Rāma, son of King Dasharatha of Koshala." And Rāma told her how his father had commanded him to dwell in the jungle for fourteen years. "Now, tell us," he said, "who you may be, for I fear you are no mortal woman."

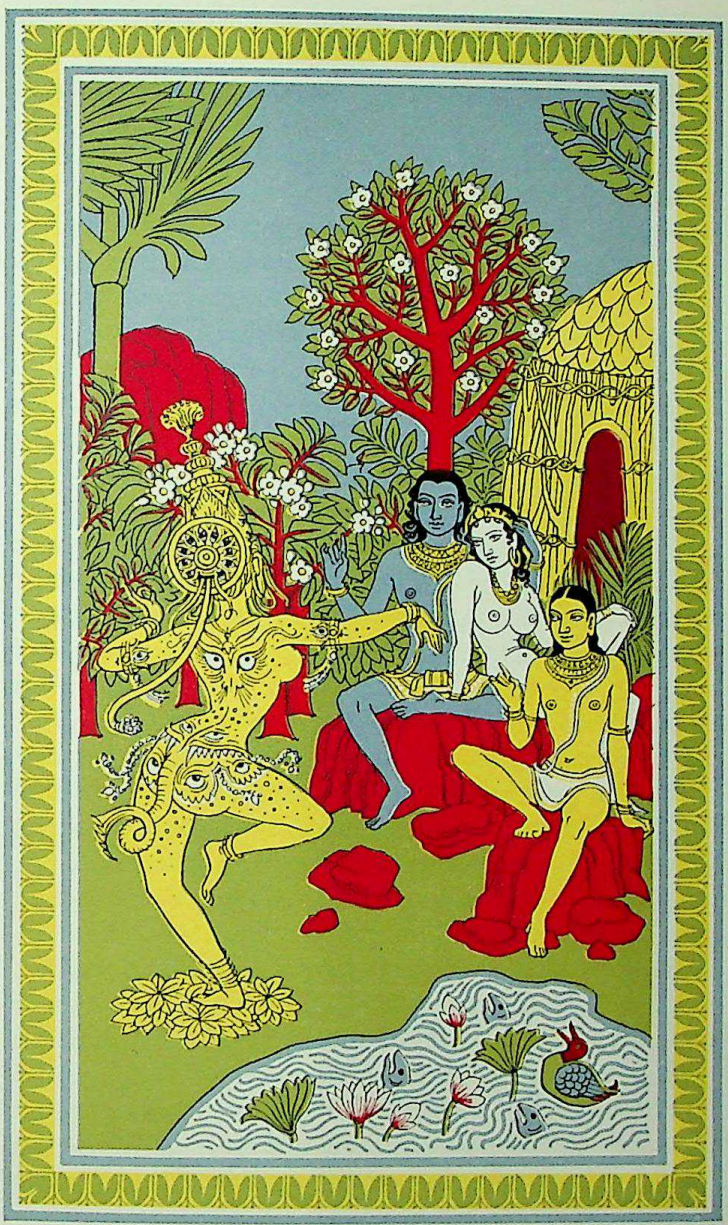
Surpanakhā laughed. "You are not wrong. I am Surpanakhā, the *rākshasi*, and my brothers are giant Kumbhakarna, like a mountain, Khara and Dushana, Vibhishana, the youngest of us, and the mighty and dread Rāvana, lord of Lankā, king of all the *rākshasas* himself. I have come here because I desire you for my husband. Put away that pale and human wife of yours, or let me slay her and your brother too, and together we shall climb the highest mountains and roam through the dark and fearful forests, well matched, and worthy of each other."

Rāma smiled. "Sītā is my loved and honoured wife, I need no other in her place." Then, seeing the anger that burnt in Surpanakhā's eyes, he mocked her a little, saying, "My brother, Lakshmana, has no wife. Why do you not woo him instead?"

Surpanakhā turned and looked on Lakshmana, and saw that, though he was not Rāma, he was comely enough, and she smiled at him, and said, "Then I will have you for my husband, young Lakshmana."

But Lakshmana laughed. "I am no more than my brother's slave, here to serve him, that is all. Would you be the wife of a slave? You, the sister of the mighty and

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

dread Rāvana, lord of Lankā, king of all the *rākshasas* himself? You would do better to seek to win Rāma's love by your beauty, and make him turn away from Sītā and set you in her place."

Surpanakhā grew angry. "Would you mock me, both of you? Then beware of the fury of a *rākshasi*." And in her own terrible shape she sprang upon Sītā as though she would have slain her, while Sītā cried out, and shrank away in terror.

Rāma and Lakshmana leapt to their feet. "We did ill to jest with a *rākshasi*," cried Rāma, and he snatched up the fainting Sītā in his arms; while Lakshmana seized his sword from within the house and struck at Surpanakhā, so that her nose and her ears were cut off, and she fled shrieking through the woods like a tempest, while the rocks and hills echoed to her cries.

She went wailing thus to her brother, Khara, and told him all that had befallen. "Go now, good Khara, and slay these three for me, and bring me their blood to drink," she pleaded.

Wrathful at the insult to his sister, Khara called up fourteen *rākshasas*, and sent them to bring Rāma and his brother and Sītā to him, and Surpanakhā went with them, to show them where Rāma might be found. But Rāma and Lakshmana were prepared for their coming, and slew them with arrows from their bows; and Surpanakhā fled once more, and sought out her brother again.

Khara called to his brother Dushana to come with a band of *rākshasas*, and with his brother and his sister, and followed by a horde of hideous *rākshasas*, Khara went forth against Rāma in his chariot that was drawn by huge white horses. As they came through the forest the jackals howled and the birds screeched and the sun darkened and grew dim. When Rāma saw them coming he said to Laksh-

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

mana, "Take Sītā to a place of safety, and I will do battle with the *rākshasas*." And though he was loath to leave Rāma to fight alone, Lakshmana did as he had been bidden, and took Sītā, pale and trembling, to a secret cave.

Rāma put on his armour and took up his weapons, and so tall and mighty he seemed to the *rākshasas* when they caught sight of him, that they were afraid. But Khara urged them on, and drove forward in his chariot, brandishing his weapons, and all the *rākshasas* followed him, howling fearsomely, uprooting trees for clubs, and hurling boulders.

Arrow after arrow Rāma shot at the *rākshasas* as they came, until many of them lay dead and the others feared for their lives. But Khara and Dushana advanced steadily, and would not turn back for all their demon-warriors that were slain. Yet, in time, even Dushana fell dying, and Khara and Rāma were face to face. A dreadful fight they had there, until at last Rāma shot a flaming arrow at his foe, and Khara was slain, and lay dead among the other *rākshasas*. And of all those who had come forth that day against Rāma, only Surpanakhā remained alive, and once again she fled, wailing.

This time she returned to the island of Lankā, and went before her eldest brother, ten-faced and twenty-armed Rāvana, king of all the *rākshasas*. "Our brothers are slain, Rāvana," she said, "and their deaths must be avenged. But do not seek to slay this Rāma in battle, for he is very mighty. He has a wife named Sītā whom he loves more than life itself. Steal her away from him, and we shall be well revenged for the deaths of our brothers."

Rāvana's jewels flashed as he rose from his golden throne. "I will bring Sītā here," he said, "and she shall be one among my wives, the lowest of them all. I will con-

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

sult with Mārīcha how it may best be done, for he is unmatched in guile."

In his chariot, drawn through the air by *rākshasa*-headed asses, Rāvana went to cunning Mārīcha, whom Rāma had once wounded and driven from the hermitage of Vishvāmitra, the *rishi*, many years before. Rāvana told him of how Rāma had slain Khara and Dushana, and of Sītā, whom he wished to carry off. "And it is you, Mārīcha, who must help me in my purpose, with your wiles," he said.

But Mārīcha looked grave, and answered, "I have no love for Rāma, for sorely did he wound me once, and many of our *rākshasa* company has he slain as well as good Khara and Dushana. But he is a mighty warrior, Rāvana, and I know that no good will come of it if you steal away his wife. If it is my counsel for which you have come here, then this is it: Seek not to enrage Rāma further by carrying Sītā away to Lankā, for it may well be the end of Lankā and all the *rākshasas*."

Rāvana was angry at his words. "Because you are a coward, Mārīcha, and because you do not wish me well, that is no reason why I should listen to such counsel. Give me your help in this thing, or it will be the worse for you." And Rāvana began to threaten him.

"It seems," said Mārīcha, "that either you or Rāma will destroy me. So be it. I will give you all the aid I may."

Rāvana was appeased. He took Mārīcha in his chariot, and together they went, drawn by the *rākshasa*-headed asses, through the air, high above the trees and mountains, to the woods of Panchāvati; and there Mārīcha alighted in the form of a deer, like to no other seen before in those woods or in any corner of the world. It was a golden deer starred with silver, swift and sleek, with sapphire-tipped horns and a little tail of rainbow hues, black hoofs, and

 CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

eyes as blue as the blue lotus-flower. In this shape Mārīcha wandered near the house where Rāma lived, waiting until Sītā should see him.

Sītā saw the deer, grazing close by her, when she came out from the house to gather flowers, and in delight she called to Rāma and Lakshmana. "I have seen many lovely sights since we came into the jungle, but never have I seen such a beast as this. The tawny gazelles of the plains are beautiful, and the swift antelopes on the hillside, and the lordly *sāmbar* stag, but this creature surpasses all. Oh, Rāma, I would have it for a pet. I beg you, fetch it for me."

"Sister," said Lakshmana, "it may well be no deer but an evil *rākshasa* in disguise. I beg you, beware of it."

But Sītā, looking on the deer, would not hear him. "I must have it for my own," she said. "Rāma, I pray you, catch it for me. Or, if it is too swift for you, slay it, and bring me that golden hide, all dappled with silver, that I may have it for my couch."

Rāma listened to her pleading. "You shall have the deer or its skin," he promised. He turned to Lakshmana. "Lest it should be no deer but a *rākshasa*, even as you fear, do not leave Sītā while I am gone, whatever danger you may think that I am in."

"I shall not leave her," promised Lakshmana. "But, Rāma, take care for yourself."

"I shall take care," Rāma reassured him. "But what Sītā wants, she must have." And he took a snare and cords to bind it, and his bow and quiver full of arrows, and went to where the supposed deer grazed. But the moment that it saw him come towards it, it leapt away among the trees. Rāma followed it, and was soon out of sight.

Far into the woodland Rāma followed the deer that was

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

Mārīcha, until at last he saw how it would be too swift for him and would escape his pursuit, so he fitted an arrow to his bow, and shot. And, as he had feared he would, Mārīcha met his death at Rāma's hands, and the deer fell to the ground, pierced through the heart. But in the moment of his dying Mārīcha, ever cunning and ever loyal to Rāvana, thought how he might lure Lakshmana into the woods, leaving Sītā unprotected, and, with his last breath, he called out in Rāma's voice, "Oh, Lakshmana, I am dying. Good brother, come to my aid." And in that moment he became himself again, and when Rāma ran forward he found that he had slain, not the lovely deer which Sītā had desired, but Mārīcha, the *rākshasa*. Filled with foreboding at the thought of the harm that Mārīcha's cry might cause, Rāma turned, and hastened through the wood towards his home.

Mārīcha's *rākshasa*-voice sped on the breeze above the tree-tops and came to the ears of Sītā and Lakshmana, and Lakshmana grew pale when he heard those words in his brother's voice. But Sītā leapt up, crying out, "Rāma is in danger, Lakshmana. Go to him."

"It is a trick," said Lakshmana. "Rāma is no coward, he does not call for help. Do not fear for him, Sītā, for he is a mighty warrior, and there is no *rākshasa* his equal."

But Sītā implored him to go to Rāma. "He is your lord and your king. Will you leave him alone in peril?"

"I promised that I would remain with you, no matter what befell. Shall I disobey Rāma because a voice calls to me from the woods?"

And in her frenzy and her fear Sītā was blind to all but Rāma's safety, and she spoke wildly in unjust words which she knew were false. "You are faithless, Lakshmana, and you would have Rāma dead. It was for this you followed him to the jungle, swearing to serve him, and

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

pretending love—so that here, in the jungle, he might meet his death and you might take me as your wife. This is so, for why else would you hold back when he calls to you?"

Lakshmana looked at her with amazement. "You are distraught," he said. "Truly, there is no limit to the lies a woman can make herself believe and speak. I have ever been faithful to Rāma, him alone I love. But since you doubt me, though I fear it is but ill-advised, I will obey you and go to him, and may the gods keep you, Sītā, from all harm." And Lakshmana took up his weapons and went into the woods.

Sītā sat in the doorway of the little house and thought, If I lose Rāma I shall die, for I cannot live without him. And she wept.

While she sat there Rāvana took the shape of a *rishi*, a good hermit clothed in brown, with tangled hair and stout sandals, carrying a staff, and he approached the house, and watched her. And when Rāvana saw her beauty as she sat there weeping, with her black hair all loose about her, he thought, Not only for revenge upon Rāma shall she be my wife, but for her beauty also, for I have seen no woman more fair. And he spoke to her, and asked her who she was.

Sītā looked up and saw Rāvana, and, thinking him to be a holy *rishi*, she rose and greeted him with reverence, and made him welcome, glad of his company and the comfort wise words could give her. "I am Sītā, daughter of King Janaka of Mithila," she said, "and I am Rāma's wife." And she told Rāvana of how Rāma had been banished to the jungle and how Lakshmana had followed him. "Now that I have told you all our story, tell me, good *rishi*, what is your name, and why do you wander through the forest?"

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

"I am no *rishi*, I am Rāvana, king of all the *rākshasas*, from the island of Lankā, Rāvana, whom even the gods fear, and I wander through this forest for no reason save that I may see and speak with you, for your beauty has won my heart. Fair Sītā, be first of all my queens and rule with me in Lankā, while my other queens kneel before you and honour you, and five thousand slaves wait upon you and obey your demands."

Sītā started up in anger. "Do you know Rāma, that mighty warrior, unmatched in battle? I am the wife of Rāma. Do you know Rāma, as firm as the mountains, as mighty as the sea? I am the wife of Rāma. Do you know Rāma, true and faithful, and unswerving in his purpose? I am the wife of Rāma. Rather seek to tear its prey from the hungry tiger, or lay your hand within reach of the cobra's poisoned fang, than seek to steal Rāma's wife. Sooner may you pluck the sun and the moon from the sky than win Rāma's wife for your own. You are mad in your presumption, Rāvana."

But Rāvana laughed and took his own shape, towering above her with his ten terrible heads and their blazing eyes, and with his twenty arms he seized her, and dragged her by her long, flowing hair to where his chariot and the *rākshasa* asses waited. In vain Sītā cried to Rāma, for he could not hear her; in vain she called to Lakshmana to pardon her suspicions, for he too was gone; and the *rākshasa* asses rose into the air with the chariot, high above the trees. "Oh, dear trees of Panchāvati, flowers that I have loved," she cried, "tell Rāma that his Sītā has been stolen away by dread Rāvana. Give him word of me that he may seek me out and avenge this wicked wrong."

The trees and the flowers in the wood were silent, but on a mountain rock, dozing in the sunshine, Sītā saw old Jatāyu, the vulture, the king of all the eagles. She called

 CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

to him, and he awoke and saw her, and, spreading his great wings, he flew after the chariot, and spoke to Rāvana. "Best would it be, lord of Lankā, if you returned Sītā to her husband. For Rāma will surely slay you if you carry her away." But Rāvana did no more than laugh in scorn at Jatāyu's words, so that the huge bird grew angry. "So long as I have life, you shall not steal away fair Sītā," he said, and fell upon Rāvana with curved beak and sharp talons.

In the sky, high above the forests and the hills, the king of the eagles fought with Rāvana, and though Jatāyu broke two of the *rākshasa* king's bows, with his twenty arms Rāvana shot so many arrows at Jatāyu that the brave old vulture grew weak, and his strength failed him, and at last, for all his courage, he fell dying to the earth, and Rāvana went his way through the sky with the weeping Sītā.

As they passed over a certain mountain named Rishyamūkha Sītā saw five monkeys sitting upon the topmost peak, and, unseen by Rāvana, she took off her jewels—her bracelets and her ear-rings and her golden anklets—and dropped them down to the monkeys, along with her silken veil, that perhaps Rāma might one day find them, and know them for hers. "It is Rāvana, lord of the *rākshasas*," said the monkeys. They watched Rāvana and his captive out of sight, and then they took up the jewels and hid them. "They belong to some unhappy woman whom the evil Rāvana has stolen away. Let us keep them safe lest her friends should claim them," said Sugriva, their king.

On and on sped Rāvana with Sītā, until the forest and the mountains were left behind and they were passing over the blue sea. And then Lankā came in sight, rising tall from the ocean, with palm-fringed shores and a city of gleaming palaces and lofty walls.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

In Lankā Rāvana took Sītā by the hand, and showed her all his treasures and the power that was his. "It is yours to share with me if you will be my wife," he said. But Sītā wept in silence. Rāvana urged her, and entreated, but in vain. "May my Rāma slay you and all your evil *rākshasa* horde," she said at last. "I will not be your wife. I am the wife of Rāma, and as his wife shall I live and die."

Then Rāvana was angered, and calling to him many hideous *rākshasis*, horrible demon-women, he gave Sītā into their hands, that they might break her courage and make her willing to be his wife. With mockery and harshness, they took her to a palace set in a grove of *ashoka*-trees, and there they kept her, guarded day and night.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

4

The Quest for Sītā

When Rāma, hurrying from the spot where he had slain Mārīcha, met with Lakshmana, who was seeking him, he was surprised and disquieted even more than he had been by Mārīcha's cry. "Why did you leave Sītā?" he demanded. "I bade you stay with her."

"I would have done so, but that she urged me so greatly to seek you," replied Lakshmana. And he told Rāma of all that had passed between him and Sītā. "I fear it is a trick," he said.

Together they hastened back to the little house, and there, as they had feared, they found Sītā gone and the four rooms empty. Together they ran through the woods of Panchāvati, crying upon the animals and birds to tell where Sītā was. By the bank of the river Godāvarī they wandered, calling her, and Rāma wept when he saw a lotus-bloom which seemed to him like Sītā's lovely face. They searched in the mountain caves where she had hidden with Lakshmana while Rāma had fought with the *rākshasas* and killed Khara and Dushana; and Rāma fell senseless from sorrow when he found a withered garland which Sītā had once worn. "The *rākshasas* have destroyed her in revenge for Khara's death," he said. And in his despair he railed even against the gods, that they had not saved Sītā from a dreadful fate.

Then, in their search, they came upon Jatāyu lying

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

upon the ground, his wings broken, and very near to death. "It is a *rākshasa*," said Rāma, "and it may well have slain and devoured Sītā. Let us kill it."

But Jatāyu raised his dying head, and spoke feebly to them, telling them how he had seen Sītā carried off by dread Rāvana. "I sought to save her for you," he said, "but I was not strong enough."

Rāma threw down his weapons and knelt beside Jatāyu, embracing him. "You were happy in your life," he said bitterly, "and now you have given that life for me and for Sītā. I am indeed accursed, that I bring disaster to those who would do me good. If I were to drink from a river the water would run dry. If I were to shelter in the shade of a tree it would fall."

"Do not grieve," whispered Jatāyu, "for you are a mighty warrior, and you will find Sītā once again, and slay Rāvana." And the brave old vulture died.

Rāma mourned his death, and together he and Lakshmana brought wood and built a pyre and laid Jatāyu upon it and burnt him, saying prayers for him to all the gods.

Then Rāma and Lakshmana wandered on, still seeking Sītā, and after a time they met with a huge *rākshasa*. He had but one eye, and sharp teeth like fangs, and arms that were strong and of great length. He stretched out his arms to seize the brothers, shouting, "Whoever you are, you are welcome, for I am hungry, and your flesh will make a feast for me."

Rāma and Lakshmana fought long and hard against the huge *rākshasa*, and at last they overcame him. "We are Rāma and his brother Lakshmana," they said, "and we seek Sītā."

Then the *rākshasa* prayed them to burn his body when he was dead, as was fitting. "If you will do this service for

 CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

me," he promised, "I will tell you of Sītā, whom you seek."

"We will do as you ask," agreed Rāma.

"My master Rāvana has taken Sītā to his own kingdom. Go and ask Sugriva, the king of the monkeys, who dwells on the mountain of Rishyamūkha, and he will give you further word of her and the help of all his people," said the *rākshasa*. And when he was dead they burnt his body fittingly, as they had promised.

Heeding the *rākshasa's* words, Rāma and Lakshmana at once set off for the mountain of Rishyamūkha, and after a weary climb they reached the summit. But they had long since been spied by the sharp eyes of the monkeys from the caves where they were hidden, and silver-furred Sugriva, the monkey king, sent forth Hanuman, his faithful general and trusted counsellor, to speak with the two princes.

Yellow-golden Hanuman greeted Rāma and Lakshmana, and asked them who they were and why they travelled alone so far from the homes of men. Lakshmana told him their story, how Rāma had been banished from Ayodhyā and how Sītā had been stolen away by Rāvana. "We do not know where Rāvana's kingdom lies," he said, "and we are come here to ask the aid of Sugriva, your king."

Hanuman led them to Sugriva and told him all that they had said, and Sugriva welcomed them kindly. "We are both of us unfortunate exiles, Rāma," he said. "Mine it should be to rule over all the monkey-folk, but my brother, Vāli, has stolen my kingdom and my wife and won over my people with promises and threats. Alone, I and those few of the monkey-folk who are true to me may never conquer Vāli in battle." He sighed, and then went on, "Our griefs are hard to bear, good Rāma, but I believe

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

that I can give you word of your wife. Many days ago the *rākshasa* king, Rāvana, flew above this mountain, and he had with him a woman who dropped a veil and her jewels down to us, as though they might be a token. But whither he has taken her, I cannot tell, for I do not know where his kingdom lies." He sent for Sītā's jewels and her veil, and gave them into Rāma's hands. "Are they familiar to you, good prince?"

Rāma and Lakshmana knew the jewels and the veil at once, and Rāma wept. "They are my Sītā's," he said.

"As we are companions in misfortune, we should be friends," said Sugriva.

Hanuman took two sticks and drew sparks from them, and kindled a fire, and Rāma and Sugriva walked about it sunwise, and swore everlasting friendship and their help to one another. Then they sat together upon a leafy bough broken from a fragrant-wooded sandal-tree, and talked of how they might achieve a victory over the usurper, Vāli, and win Sugriva's kingdom back for him. "And when that is done," promised Sugriva, "we monkeys shall search out your Sītā, and she shall be restored to you."

When their plans were made Rāma and Lakshmana, together with Sugriva and Hanuman and those few monkeys who had remained true to their rightful king, went to the rocky city of the monkeys, where Vāli ruled. And there Sugriva lifted up his voice, and called out a mighty challenge to his brother to come and fight with him.

From within the sheltering walls Vāli heard the challenge and arose. "It is my brother calls to me to fight with him." And he took up his weapons and made to go forth. But Tārā, his wife, sought to hold him back. "The last time Sugriva met you in battle he fled in terror. If he has dared to come back again to fight with you he cannot be alone. He must have some mighty ally at his side. Beware

 CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

of an adversary too strong for you, I beg of you, good Vāli."

"I have no fear of my brother, Sugriva, nor of any whom he may bring with him," boasted Vāli.

"Peace in all things is wisest," pleaded Tārā. "Call Sugriva your friend, and share the rule of the monkey-folk with him. For he is your brother, and brothers should be friends."

But Vāli answered haughtily, "Shall I reply with kind words to an insolent challenge from one whom I defeated when last we met? That would be an ever-enduring shame to me. Were I dying I would go forth to answer Sugriva's challenge." And he thrust Tārā aside, and strode to where Sugriva waited with Rāma and Lakshmana at his side. Vāli paused, the golden chain he wore about him glinting in the sunlight, and he raised his right hand in proud defiance. "This hand shall send you, my defeated brother, down to death, crushed and broken."

But Sugriva in turn raised up his right hand. "It is you who will perish, usurping Vāli, when this hand shatters the life from your head." And, with two quick leaps, the brothers were upon each other, and had closed to fight, their strong arms straining as each held the other in a mighty grip.

Hour after hour the battle lasted. With stones they struck each other, and they tore up trees to use as clubs; but at last Vāli was proved the stronger, and he held Sugriva faint and powerless, as with triumph he prepared to slay him. But with the strength that was yet left to him, Sugriva called to Rāma. And because Rāma was his sworn friend, Rāma could not let him die. He fitted an arrow to his bow and shot it; and, even as he stood in triumph above the helpless Sugriva, Vāli fell, pierced through the heart.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Tārā mourned for her dead lord, and Sugriva, too, was sad. "Would that we could have lived in friendship, for we were brothers," he said. And he showed all kindness to Vāli's son, Angada, naming him his own heir. But Sugriva's grief was forgotten in his praise of Rāma, who had saved his life and won his kingdom back for him. With great pomp he entered his city once again, while all the monkey-folk bowed low before him. But when he would have shared his state with Rāma, and entertained him richly, Rāma refused him, saying, "I have no heart to tarry in a city, since I have been cast out from my own city of Ayodhyā. I will dwell in a cave of the mountains until we can fare forth to seek my Sītā."

And he and Lakshmana made themselves a home in a mountain cave, for the rainy season was upon them, when the plaintive, wearisome call of the cuckoo is heard, and the monsoon brings the torrential rains with which Indra blesses the parched land, turning the dry earth to fertile mud in which the rice will grow; and at such times there is but little travelling.

For the four months of the rainy season they waited, and then Sugriva called together all his monkey-folk, and pledged them to Rāma's service in the search for Sītā. Then he sent forth four bands of his most trusted scouts to spy throughout all India and find where Rāvana's kingdom lay; one band to the north, another to the west, one to the east, and yet another to the south. This last band was led by loyal Hanuman, in whom Sugriva had more trust than in any other. Seeing Sugriva's confidence, Rāma, too became hopeful that if any could find Sītā it would be golden Hanuman, and he gave him a ring to take with him, bidding him give it to Sītā if he found her. "She will know it for mine, and trust you," he said,

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

For a month Rāma waited with Sugriva, and at the end of that time the monkeys who had gone to the north and to the west and to the east returned to say that they had met with no sign of Sītā. And Rāma was in despair.

The monkeys led by Hanuman searched throughout all the southern lands of India and found no trace of Sītā, until at last they reached the sea. And there, on a mountain overlooking the wide ocean, they sat disconsolate, believing that they had failed in their quest. But while they talked dejectedly among themselves they chanced to speak of old Jatāyu, the king of the eagles, who had given his life for Sītā; and from a cave near by Jatāyu's brother, Sampati, heard them, and came out to speak with them. Sampati could not fly, for his wings had been scorched long before, when he spread them too close to the sun to shield his brother Jatāyu as he slept. "Tell me," he asked, "what is it you say of my brother Jatāyu?"

The monkeys told him how Jatāyu had been slain, trying to save Sītā from Rāvana, and Sampati said, "Though I can no longer fly, my eyes are sharp enough, and it will have been that very same Sītā whom I saw, many days past, being carried through the air by the *rākshasa* king, to his island of Lankā, a hundred leagues over the sea. Go there and rescue her, and kill Rāvana, that my brother Jatāyu may be avenged."

The monkeys were overjoyed at his words, and hastened down to the seashore, but when they came there and saw how far away Lankā lay they grew dejected once again. "A hundred leagues of ocean lie between us and Lankā, how shall we reach Rāvana's home and speak with Sītā?" they asked.

One of them spoke up. "I can leap no more than twenty leagues," he said. "I could not reach to Lankā."

"And I," said another, "no more than fifty leagues."

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Another said that he might leap as much as eighty leagues, and still another, ninety. "Yet would that be ten leagues short of a hundred," he said sadly.

White-furred Angada, the young son of Vāli, who was with them, said, "I could leap a hundred leagues, but it would take all my strength, and I should have none left for a return. And what should we gain if I leapt to Lankā and stayed there to be slain by the *rākṣhasas*?"

They sighed and all fell silent, sorrowing. Then one of their number, wise old Jambavān, went to Hanuman and spoke to him. "You are the strongest and the mightiest of us all," he said. "Do you leap to Lankā and bring us back word of Sītā. For if any one of the monkey-folk could succeed in this task it is you, our brave Hanuman. Can you not remember how, when you were but young, you thought that the sun was a ripe mango growing in the sky, and you leapt so high to pick it that Indra, who rules the firmament, was angered? Do you leap now to Lankā and back again, good Hanuman."

And at his words the pride and courage of bold Hanuman increased, and amid cries of joy from the other monkeys he jumped to his feet and shouted, "I will leap to Lankā. Yes, and I will leap back again with word of Sītā." He climbed once more to the mountain-top, and there he prayed to the sun and the wind for help, and then, drawing himself up and growing tall and great, a giant monkey indeed, with his tail lashing and his arms swinging, and giving a mighty growl, he leapt high into the air and out across the ocean, his eyes flashing through the sky like fires.

Two great *rākṣhasis* rose up from the waves to prevent him, the Serpent Mother and Sinhikha. The Serpent Mother opened wide her huge jaws to catch him, but he evaded her safely, though not without much pain. Horrible Sinhikha caught his shadow, and would have

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

swallowed him, but he stretched himself to his very fullest height and slew her, and continued on his way over the sea until at last he dropped through the air on to the palm-cloaked shores of Lankā, where he shrank to his wonted size once more, and hid to wait till evening fell, when he might not be seen.

By moonlight he stole into the city, and made his way to Rāvana's palace, and, entering, crept silently from hall to hall, seeking Sītā. At last he came to the jewelled chamber where Rāvana lay asleep upon a huge bed hung about with golden lamps, and all around him slept his many wives, each one more lovely than the last. How shall I know Sītā from all these others? said Hanuman to himself. And then he reflected, She will be the most beautiful of all, it will not be hard to find her. He pattered carefully around the room until he came to where Mandodarī lay, decked with gold and gems, and clad in silk. She was Rāvana's foremost queen, and more beautiful than any other of his wives. This will be Sītā, thought Hanuman. And, in his joy at having found her, he pranced and frolicked, flirting and whisking his tail, and sang a little song, jumping up and down the golden pillars.

But suddenly the thought came to him that it could not be Sītā whom he had found. For Sītā would not wear silken garments nor deck herself with jewels nor even comb her hair, were her Rāma not with her, he told himself. Such things would have no meaning for her, were she parted from her lord. And, sadly, he continued his search. But though he entered every chamber in the palace, he could nowhere find a lovely woman unkempt and sorrowing.

At last he left the palace, and, passing through the streets of Lankā, sat hunched and miserable upon the city wall, his long arms clasped about him. If I return without

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

word of Sītā, he thought, Rāma's heart will surely break, and he will die, and for sorrow of his brother's death Lakshmana, too, will die, and in Ayodhyā loyal Bharata will perish when his brother comes not home, and for grief that his sworn friend is dead Sugriva, my king, will die, and with him all the monkey-folk. No, I cannot condemn so many noble beings to death. I must not return without word of Sītā. I must search all the island and leave no place unseen.

Before him lay a grove of *ashoka*-trees, with their greenish-golden blossoms, and as he watched it in the first light of dawn Hanuman fancied he saw a building hidden among the shining foliage. Perhaps she may be there, he thought, and leapt down from the wall and into the grove; and there he broke his way through the close-growing branches until he stood before the building, and saw that it was a palace with stairways built of coral and with glittering golden pavements, and before it, in an open space, stood one *ashoka*-tree, more lovely than all the others. Hanuman hurried towards it, and swung himself into its slender branches, and from among the narrow, pointed leaves looked down into the palace.

And there, in a hall in that palace, he saw a woman, pale and thin, with ragged garments and dishevelled hair, who would have been most beautiful if she had been happy; and watching about her, as though she were their prisoner, were many *rākshasis*, hideous and terrible. Some had the heads of animals upon bodies that might have been women's, some had but one eye while others had many, some were small, like dwarfs, and others were giant women, and some, again, were hairy, with long, drooping ears. "It is Sītā," thought Hanuman, in triumph. "I have found her at last." And he waited hidden in the *ashoka*-tree for a chance to speak with her.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

But when day was come he heard the sound of many feet approaching, and he saw Rāvana, followed by all his wives, enter the grove and call to Sītā. As he drew near to her she trembled, and turned away, and hid her face in her hands, and wept.

"Fair Sītā," said Rāvana, "once again I come to bid you be my wife." And he offered her power and wealth and all that a woman might desire, if only she would forget her love for Rāma.

But Sītā took her hands from her face, and looked at Rāvana with scorn, and, for all her terror and her tears, her words were fearless. "I will never be your wife, Rāvana. And one day Rāma will come to fetch me, and on that day you will die."

Rāvana grew angry. "I shall give you two months longer to refuse me, and if by then you will not marry me I shall have you slain. I have borne your obstinacy long enough." And he turned and left her, going from the *ashoka*-grove followed by his gay and jewelled wives.

The hideous *rākshasis* crowded about Sītā, laughing and mocking her and threatening, so that she fled away from them while they shrieked with cruel mirth. Weeping, Sītā crept to the foot of the *ashoka*-tree where Hanuman was hidden, and lay crouched beneath it in despair.

When he saw that there was no one else to hear him Hanuman spoke softly, as though to himself, telling of Rāma's parentage and deeds, his banishment, and the loss of his wife, and Sītā looked up and saw the bright-eyed monkey, and wondered at his words. Then Hanuman jumped down from the *ashoka*-tree and stood before her. He bowed to her, and spoke as a friend. "Most worthy Sītā, I come from Rāma, your lord." But she feared him for an enchantment of Rāvana, sent to torment her, and she would not trust his protests. Then he handed her the

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

ring which Rāma had given to him, and she took it with a cry, and clasped it to her heart. "I know it well," she said. "It is Rāma's ring. Now will I believe that you are indeed his friend, whom he has sent. Tell me, quickly, how he fares. Does he still grieve for me? And will he soon be here to save me from the anger of Rāvana?"

"He thinks of you night and day," said Hanuman, "and he will soon be here, and with him Lakshmana, and Sugriva, my king, and all the monkey host. And when they are come Rāvana will regret his evil deed."

"Go back to him," said Sītā, "and bid him come quickly, for when two months are passed Rāvana has sworn to kill me if I will not be his wife."

"Give me a token for Rāma, that he may know that I have seen and spoken with you," said Hanuman. And Sītā told him two secrets of their life together, known only to Rāma and herself, and she took a jewelled ornament from her uncombed hair, and gave it to him. "It was once my father's gift to me, when I wed with Rāma. Take it now to him, he will remember it."

Hanuman took the jewel and bent low before Sītā. "When next you see me," he said, "Rāma will be with me." And, with a bound, he was gone from her.

But he was not content to leave her without striking one blow against the horrible *rākshasis* who guarded her, so stretching himself to his giant size, he rushed upon the palace and battered on its walls, so that gold and marble and coral lay ruined, and the *rākshasis* sent to tell Rāvana of how a giant monkey was despoiling the *ashoka*-grove. Angered, Rāvana sent *rākshasas* to slay Hanuman, but Hanuman killed so many of them that the others were afraid and held back, and Hanuman rejoiced.

But then Rāvana's son, Indrajit, came out against him, and Indrajit was a mighty sorcerer. He took up his bow,

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

and shot at Hanuman a magic arrow that, when it touched him, became a serpent which entwined itself about him so that he could not stir; and the *rākshasas* came and took him, and dragged him in triumph to Rāvana, howling and cursing him, and mocking. "We are hungry," they cried. "Here is flesh for us to eat." And they laughed horribly.

With all his twenty glaring eyes, Rāvana watched Hanuman. "Who are you?" he asked.

"I am a messenger sent to you from mighty Rāma," replied Hanuman boldly, "to bid you release Sītā, his wife. For if you keep her longer as your captive, when Rāma comes to take her you will lose not only Sītā but your life."

Rāvana was very angry. "Take him away and slay him," he said; and the *rākshasas* howled in glee.

But Rāvana's counsellors said, "Kill him now, and Rāma will never learn of our might. Would it not be better to free him after we have dealt with him in a way that will terrify Rāma when he hears of it? Thus will our enemies be made to fear us." And to this Rāvana agreed.

Then the *rākshasas* soaked cloth in oil, and tied it to Hanuman's tail, and set fire to it, and then they dragged him about the streets of Lankā, that all there might see him burning and mock at him and his sufferings. But Hanuman bore the pain, and watched carefully in the daylight all the streets and buildings of the city, which he had until then seen only by night, so that he might remember them when he came again with Rāma against Lankā, and the knowledge might serve them well.

Then, when he had learnt all he could he shrunk to his own size, and the bonds fell from him, and he fled from his enemies through the city, setting fire to houses and palaces with his burning tail as he fled. Then he leapt right over the walls of Lankā, and quenched his tail in the

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

sea; and, taking once more his giant size, he leapt again over the ocean, and came to where the other monkeys waited for him with Angada, Vāli's son. They greeted him gladly, dancing and leaping about him, and bringing him fruits to eat.

"We must return at once to Rāma, and tell him our good tidings," said Angada. And, as fast as the wind, the monkeys returned to Sugriva, their king, and to Rāma and Lakshmana, where they waited, longing for news; and Hanuman told Rāma how Sītā had been found. When he gave him the jewel she had sent him, and told him the two secrets, Rāma wept. "How well I remember the day her father, good King Janaka, gave her this gem," he said. Then, with gratitude, he spoke to Hanuman. "You have served me well, yet I have no reward to offer you save only my thanks and my friendship." And he embraced Hanuman, and called him his brother.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

5

War in Lankā

Led by Rāma and Lakshmana and by their king, Sugriva, all the monkey-folk hastened southward to the sea, and with them went certain friendly bears, having as their leader noble Jambāvan, who had urged Hanuman to leap to Lankā. When this army reached the coast and gathered on the shore so great it was that it covered every grain of sand.

When Rāvana learnt of how a mighty army with Rāma at its head waited on the mainland to cross to Lankā against him he summoned his brothers and his counsellors and Indrajit, his son, that they might discuss together what it were best to do. "Hanuman, the monkey, has been to our island," he said. "He has spoken with Sītā and burnt down part of our great city, and now Rāma, with an army, seeks to cross the sea to Lankā and destroy us. What is your counsel—shall we fight, or shall we sue for peace?"

At once Rāvana's foremost general, Prahasta, rose. Fierce and cruel he was, and very terrible in battle. "You are safe from the weapons of gods and spirits and *rākshasas*, great lord of Lankā, you have Brahmā's promise for it. How need you fear a feeble man, banished from his own land, and followed by an army of monkeys? As for Hanuman—he came here as a spy, in open warfare he would be no match for one of us." Prahasta laughed. "Why, my king, I alone could scatter our puny foes, and slay them every one."

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

And so they spoke, the *rākshasas*, howling out their anger against Rāma and the monkeys, and boasting how each one of them could conquer single-handed. All of them save Vibhishana, Rāvana's youngest brother, who rose, and spoke quietly. "I beg your forgiveness, brother, if I speak against these others, our loyal friends, but it would be disloyalty in me to keep silent at this hour. Do not think, Rāvana, that this Rāma, being a mortal man, is beneath our consideration. He is a mighty warrior and well-tried, and in this cause he fights with justice at his side, for Sītā is his wife, stolen from him most unjustly. Good brother, it would be wisest were you to return his wife to him, and not risk the lives of your faithful *rākshasas* in striving to keep an ill-gotten prize. Send Sītā back to Rāma, my brother, and our Lankā shall be safe."

Rāvana frowned in anger and his voice was hard. "Ill is the cowardly counsel you would give me, Vibhishana—you alone of all my counsellors." And the other *rākshasa* chiefs all cried out against Vibhishana.

But another of Rāvana's brothers, Kumbhakarna, the giant, huge as a mountain, who ate and drank more at one time than all the other *rākshasas* together, and who slept for six months on end and was always tired, yet, when roused, was the greatest fighter of them all save Rāvana, the king, stretched himself, and yawned, and said in a voice that rumbled like thunder, "Vibhishana is right. It was a foolish action to steal Rāma's wife and bring a war on Lankā. But I am loyal to my king and brother, whether he be right or wrong, and if my strength is needed I shall fight for him, even against the gods." And he yawned again, and said no more.

Then young Indrajit, Rāvana's son, who was a sorcerer of might, stood up. "See, my father, how we are all with you in this thing, all save Vibhishana, my uncle, who is

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
not worthy of our *rākshasa* blood. What can a poor human creature achieve against us, with your power and my knowledge on our side? For have I not fought even against the gods before this day, fought against them and conquered?"

Rāvana turned to Vibhishana. "Of all falseness and treachery," he said, "the most hated falseness and the direst treachery are those of close kinsmen. With guile, you speak as though for my own welfare, but in your heart you long for my destruction, that you may grasp my throne and my power in your greedy hands. Since the thoughts in your false heart are theirs, go, traitor, seek out Rāma and his monkeys, and fight upon their side." Rāvana's eyes glowed in wrath, and his twenty fists clenched. "Were you not my brother, Vibhishana, I would slay you myself."

"I would have saved you from the fate that will be yours, Rāvana. But make haste towards your destruction if you prefer the counsel of those who speak only what you would hear." And Vibhishana went from the council-chamber, and four of his friends with him. They rose into the air, as *rākshasas* could, and passed over the sea to the mainland. And there Vibhishana offered himself as an ally to Rāma, with all his knowledge of Lankā and his brother's forces.

The monkeys did not trust him, and they cried out for his death, but Rāma had faith in his words, and was for giving him the chance to prove his goodwill. "If you will truly aid us," he said, "yours will be the throne of Lankā when your brother has been slain."

Then Rāma and Sugriva and Hanuman asked Vibhishana if he knew how they could cross the sea to Lankā with their great army, and he replied, "Pray to the Lord of the Ocean, and he may hear you."

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

So, having offered sacrifices, facing the east, Rāma lay and meditated on the sea, praying the Lord of the Ocean to come to his aid; and for three days he lay thus, and still the Lord of the Ocean had not heard him. Then he grew impatient, and, rising, fitted an arrow to his bow, and shot it into the sea. Arrow after arrow he shot into the waters, churning them into tempestuous waves, until the serpent-spirits and the fishes who dwelt in the sea were disturbed and shaken; but yet the Lord of the Ocean paid no heed. Then Rāma took up an arrow that had been blessed in the name of Brahmā, the Creator, and raised his bow once more. The sky grew dark with foreboding, while the monkey host trembled and was afraid.

And then, at last, the Lord of the Ocean rose up from the depths, white and shining, and riding on a sea-monster, attended by the creatures of the water, and he spoke to Rāma. "To each element," he said, "are its own attributes. It is fitting that the sea should be deep and inexhaustible, and that it should be hard to cross. I may not part my waves for you, nor will I permit that you should walk upon them as upon dry land. Yet, if you build a bridge from where you stand to Lankā I will see that it holds firm and is not washed away. Among your host is a monkey named Nala, he is skilled in crafts, bid him show you how a bridge may be built." And the Lord of the Ocean sank slowly beneath the sea, shining and splendid.

Rāma sent for Nala, whose fur was of a greenish colour, and bade him build a bridge; and gladly Nala set the other monkeys to fetch rocks and stones and hew down trees and drag them to the shore, and he showed them how to heap them in the water in the form of a huge causeway. And, with so many hands to help, in five days the work was done; and there, between the mainland and the island

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh
of Lankā, like a broad, firm bridge, was a chain of rocky islands, which to this very day is called the Bridge of Rāma.

With shouts of joy, the monkey leaders, together with Rāma and Lakshmana and Vibhishana, the *rākshasa*, hastened across the bridge, followed by the great monkey army and the bears.

And so Rāma came at last to Lankā, where Sītā was imprisoned.

The monkey host encircled the city and laid siege to it. The bold monkey-warrior, red-furred Nilā, drew up his followers before the eastern gate, which was guarded by Prahasta, Rāvana's great and cruel general. Angada, the son of Vāli, stood before the western gate; Hanuman waited at the southern gate for Indrajit, Rāvana's son; while Rāma led a band of monkeys against the northern gate, which was held by Rāvana himself. With trees for clubs, and with stones which they might fling, the monkeys attacked, crying out for Rāma and Sugriva; and, at the same moment, the gates opened, and the *rākshasas* came forth, blowing on their trumpets and beating on their kettle-drums, until the air resounded with the din. The *rākshasas* rode on elephants and tigers, on boars and on striped hyenas, and they had weapons of all kinds.

In this battle Rāvana gave the leadership of the *rākshasa* army to his son, Indrajit, the sorcerer, who had many magic weapons. Driven in his chariot, Indrajit led the terrible *rākshasa* horde against the monkey-folk and the bears, and the slaughter they did was great. But at last Sugriva tore up and flung a tall tree at Indrajit, so that his chariot was broken, and the *rākshasas* took flight, and returned into their city.

Yet, as soon as he had mounted into another chariot,

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

Indrajit came forth again, and this time, by his arts, he made himself invisible; and with him he brought a magic serpent-arrow, like to that with which he had bound Hanuman in the *ashoka*-grove. This arrow he shot at Rāma and Lakshmana where they fought side by side, and, like a snake, it coiled about them so that they were bound fast together, and fell senseless to the earth. The monkeys stood about them crying out in their despair, while Indrajit, unseen by any of his foes save his *rākshasa* uncle, Vibhishana, ranged around and shot many arrows at the monkey leaders, so that Hanuman and Nilā were wounded, as also was Jambavān, who led the bears. Then, joyful with his victory, Indrajit drove through the gates of Lankā, where he was welcomed by Rāvana.

The monkeys had quite lost heart, and though Vibhishana tried to rouse their courage, he could in no way do so, and they crouched despondently about their leaders, mourning Rāma and Lakshmana dead, as they seemed to be. But Rāvana, fetching Sītā from the *ashoka*-grove, drove with her about the battleground, and showed her how Rāma and Lakshmana lay still and wounded. "For all your boasting, see where your Rāma lies, whom you swore would slay me," he laughed.

Sītā wept, for she believed her husband to be dead. "Alas," she said, "alas for Ayodhyā, for that great city and its people will see Rāma no more." Her sorrow was so great that even Trijata, the *rākshasi* who attended her, was moved to pity, and whispered gently, "He is not dead, your Rāma. He will live to fight again." But still weeping and uncomforted, Sītā was brought back to Lankā.

Then Rāma opened his eyes, and his senses were restored to him, but he was yet bound fast by the serpent-arrow. He saw how still and silent Lakshmana lay, and thought him to be dead. Weeping, he looked upon the

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

mourning monkeys. "Well have you fought for me, my friends," he said, "and poor has been your reward. This war is over for us. Go now, before it is too late, across the bridge which Nala built, back to your own homes, for another day upon this island will surely see the deaths of all of you."

But in spite of their fear the monkeys would not go, and Sugriva, though himself without hope, sought to comfort Rāma, telling him that all was not yet lost. And even as he spoke a great wind arose and swept over the battle-ground, and, looking up, they all saw with awe Garuda, the serpent-slayer, half giant and half bird, the servant of Vishnu, the Preserver, flying above their heads.

Garuda swooped low to the earth where Rāma and Lakshmana lay, and at his coming the arrows which had pierced them fell from their wounds; while the serpent-cords which bound them dropped from their limbs in the presence of the serpent-slayer. Gently he laid his hands upon their heads, and instantly the brothers rose up, once more strong and well again. "Do not despair, Rāma," said Garuda, "for the gods are with you in your great task, and in the end you will conquer." Then he was gone from them, gliding through the sky far above their heads.

Garuda's words and aid had given the monkeys comfort and new hope, and with a will they set themselves once more to attack the walls of Lankā; and out through the gates of the city the *rākshasas* poured forth again to meet their onslaught. Hanuman, though wounded in the fighting, slew their leader, but they came on with another in his place, a leader mightier than the last, and one who with each blow he struck slew five monkeys and more. But at last he, too, was slain by young Angada, and Sugriva was glad at the courage of his dead brother's son.

But the *rākshasas* returned with yet another leader, cruel

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Prahasta, the chief of all Rāvana's generals, he who had been the first to counsel his king to seek war against Rāma and the monkey host. Prahasta came among the monkeys in his chariot, slaying with deadly arrows on every side, until red Nilā, with an uprooted tree, fell upon him, and broke his bow, and the two of them fought weaponless, clawing and biting, and hurling stones. With a mighty rock, Nilā crushed Prahasta's head, so that with wailing, the *rākshasas* fled for the gates of Lankā, while Rāma and the monkeys rejoiced.

But their rejoicing lasted no more than a little time, for when he heard that Prahasta was slain Rāvana rose up in his wrath, and, mounting into his chariot and calling his most horrible *rākshasa* attendants to go with him, himself led his army through the gates of his city and on to the battleground. Invincible he seemed, towering in his battle-chariot, with the *rākshasas* yelling and brandishing their flaming weapons at his back, so that the hearts of the monkey-folk were filled with dread.

Rāvana laughed, and, with contempt, he bade his followers stand and keep from the fight. "Let you rest yourselves a while," he said, "till I slay these men and beasts unaided." And his chariot thundered over the ground, and his twenty eyes flashed fire. Sugriva snatched up a huge boulder, and went forward to meet him with courage, hurling the great rock with all his might. But Rāvana brushed it aside as though it had been a little stone, and with one flaming arrow he felled Sugriva to the earth.

Then Nala of the green fur, who had built the bridge to Lankā from the mainland, stepped bravely forward with his club; but him, too, Rāvana wounded sorely, while he remained unhurt himself. And so it was with Nilā and with Hanuman and with all the monkey leaders who

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

sought to attack Rāvana, until they called to Rāma to avenge them.

"Good brother," said Lakshmana, "let this battle be mine."

"Go, and may the gods prosper you," said Rāma.

Lakshmana strode forward. "King of Lankā," he called, "you have fought with my good friends, the monkeys. Let us see now how you can fight with a man."

Rāvana raised his bow, and shot his flaming shafts at Lakshmana, but with his own well-aimed arrows the young prince shattered each one of them in the air as it came towards him, until Rāvana saw that thus he might not slay Lakshmana, and he took up his fiery spear, which he had once had from the gods themselves. He hurled it, and Lakshmana fell senseless. Rāvana rejoiced at his triumph, and made to take Lakshmana into his chariot, that he might bear him captive into Lankā. But Rāma and Hanuman came against him to prevent him, and while Hanuman bore Lakshmana to safety Rāma fought with the *rākshasa* king. Hanuman returned to them. "Mount upon my back," he said to Rāma, "and we will fight together against him." And, mounted upon the golden monkey's back, Rāma fought against Rāvana in his chariot, and a mighty battle they had.

Grimly they fought until Rāvana's chariot was shattered and broken, and, with ten arrows, Rāma shot away the ten royal headdresses from the *rākshasa* king's ten heads, and, chariotless and crownless, Rāvana retreated with his army into Lankā, while the monkeys shouted their glee and crowded about Rāma, capering and chattering.

In Lankā Rāvana said, "We must rouse Kumbhakarna that he may fight for us, for he is the mightiest of my brothers." And he sent to wake the giant.

In the cavern where Kumbhakarna lay snoring the

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

many *rākshasas* who had been sent to him prepared a feast that he might eat his fill when he awoke; deer and cattle they slaughtered, hills of rice they heaped about him, and vats of blood that he might drink. Then they called out to waken him. But he did not hear. They beat on kettle-drums and blew on horns and yelled in unison; but still Kumbhakarna snored. They struck at him with staves and clubs, and pricked him with their spears; but Kumbhakarna only snored the louder. They climbed upon him, and poured pots of water in his ears; yet he only stirred in his sleep to brush them off as though they had been flies. In despair they brought elephants and drove them up, across, and down the mountain that was his body; and at last Kumbhakarna opened his eyes, and sat up and stretched himself, and yawned, and asked in anger, "Why have I been disturbed?" His eyes burnt like fires, and his yawns shook his cavern. But his anger was forgotten, and his desire for sleep, when he saw the feast they had made ready, and he snatched up the deer and ate them whole, and scooping up a hill of rice, he poured it down his throat, while the vats of blood served but to sharpen his thirst for more.

Then the *rākshasas* bowed low before him, and told him how they were come from Rāvana, his brother, to bid him fight for them against Rāma and Lakshmana, and against the monkey army. "I am yet hungry," said Kumbhakarna. "I will go and seek some monkeys to eat. And when I have slain them all there will be food enough for each of you even when my appetite is satisfied. And as for Rāma and Lakshmana, I will drink their blood myself."

He heaved up his great body and went to Rāvana. "Take courage, brother," he thundered, "for I will save Lankā for you." Then, girding on his golden armour, and

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

drinking all the wine he could find within his reach, he strode out through the gates of Lankā, roaring like a tempest, and at his approach the monkeys fled away. But the monstrous giant pursued them, snatching them up in fistfuls, and cramming them into his mouth, rejoicing at his dreadful feast. Right to the shores of Lankā he pursued them, until white Angada, Vāli's son, cried to them to turn and fight; and taking courage from their leaders, the monkey-folk picked up rocks and stones to hurl against their enemy. But all in vain, for their missiles were as nothing to Kumbhakarna, and their courage was of no avail. One after another, he struck down the monkey leaders, and they fell wounded on the beach, Hanuman, Nilā, and Angada; while Sugriva he seized, and would have borne him off in triumph as a prisoner to Lankā, had the monkey king not struggled to free himself, and fled.

Kumbhakarna fought his way to where Lakshmana stood, his weapons ready, and they fought together. Then Kumbhakarna spoke to Lakshmana, rumbling out the words in a great voice. "You are a brave and fine warrior, young prince from Ayodhyā, but it is your brother, Rāma, whom I would meet in battle."

"You may be tall and like a mountain, giant, and unmatched among the *rākshasas* save by Rāvana, your king. Yet you will be no match for my brother, Rāma. See where he comes." And Lakshmana stood aside from the battle while Rāma fought with the huge *rākshasa*. Their conflict was terrible. Though weak from the giant's mighty strokes, arrow after arrow Rāma shot at Kumbhakarna, and each one wounded him; and at last, with an arrow barbed like a crescent moon, Rāma shot away one of Kumbhakarna's mighty arms, and with another arrow he shot away the second. Then, with two more arrows, he shot away his legs; and lastly, with a shaft that had been

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

blessed in the name of Indra, lord of the sky, he shot off his head; and Kumbhakarna, the giant *rākshasa*, fell into the sea, which trembled and heaved, while the waves washed upon the shore, high up along the sand.

In Lankā the *rākshasas* wailed to see the fall of Kumbhakarna, but Indrajit stood before his father, and declared, "I will go forth once more against our enemies, and this time I shall slay Rāma and Lakshmana, and victory will be ours." So again rendering himself invisible, he rose into the air, and from above the battleground he showered arrows on the monkey host like rain, so that many of them were slain, and Rāma and Lakshmana were sorely wounded, and lay so still and senseless that Indrajit thought they were dead, and he returned in triumph to his father.

That night, when darkness had fallen, by the light of flickering torches, Hanuman and Vibhishana went about the battleground to see who had been slain and who still lived, and there, dying, they found Jambavān, who led the bears. His sight was failing and he did not know them, save only Vibhishana, the *rākshasa*, from his voice. "Is brave Hanuman yet living?" he asked.

"I am here," said Hanuman, and he knelt before Jambavān, and touched his feet.

Jambavān whispered weakly, "On the very highest peak of Himālaya there grow four life-giving herbs. Good Hanuman, as you once leapt to Lankā across the blue ocean, do you now leap to snow-crowned Himālaya and fetch those herbs that our lives may be saved."

Hanuman stretched himself out to his giant size, and, with a slash of his tail and a mighty roar, he leapt and was gone. Right over the sea to India he leapt, and then northward he leapt over forest and plain, over city and

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

river, leap after leap, until he stood on the highest peak of the mighty mountain Himālaya. But many herbs grew there, and he did not know which four they were that Jambavān had spoken of, and he grew impatient in his search. So, with all the strength of his giant size, he tore up the mountain crest and leapt with it southward towards the sea, and over the sea to Lankā. And there the healing fragrance of the four life-giving herbs restored to life all those monkeys who had been slain, while Rāma and Lakshmana and Jambavān and those others who were wounded were whole upon the instant. But of the *rākshasas* who had died, not one arose again.

Then Hanuman took up the mountain peak, and, bounding joyously, he returned it to its place, and came yet once again to Lankā, as dawn was breaking. Emboldened by their recovery, the monkeys stormed the gates of Lankā, flinging blazing brands into the city, so that it flared like a mighty torch. Rāvana sent forth the finest *rākshasa* warriors who were left to him; but one after another they were slain, and Rāvana bewailed their deaths. Then Indrajit spoke to his father. "It is by sorcery and not by force of arms that this battle shall be won."

By his crafts he made a false image of Sītā, and placed it in his chariot, and, going through the city gates, he drove about the battleground, dragging the image by the hair, and striking it; then, with his sword, he cut off its head. And Hanuman, seeing, thought it to be Sītā whom Indrajit slew, and he hastened to where Rāma fought, to tell him the terrible tidings. When he heard how Sītā had been slain Rāma fell senseless, struck down by grief. But Vibhishana raised him up, saying, "This will be no more than a trick of Indrajit, to fill you with despair. For he is cunning, and well skilled in magic arts, and never would he slay the woman whom his father would have for queen.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Take heart, Rāma, trust him not, but pursue him, even into Lankā, and slay him."

Together with Lakshmana and Vibhishana, Rāma went after Indrajit, and the sorcerer turned and spoke to them. "Is it you, my traitor uncle, and you two human creatures whom I have already laid low upon the battleground, who would seek to kill me?"

"Were you not evil in your mocking heart, my nephew," said Vibhishana sadly, "and over-proud in your fell sorcery, you would know me for no traitor. But you are blinded, in your pride, and, with your father, doomed for your insults to the gods."

"You laid me low upon the battleground," said Lakshmana, "because you fought with sorcery, unseen, and like a coward. Were you to meet me openly, face to face, the victory might not be yours."

Indrajit laughed. "Come, then," he mocked, "come, then, and fight with me, little mortal prince. It will be your last fight of all." And he flung a shaft at Lakshmana.

Against Indrajit's magic weapons Lakshmana's armour and his arrows were of no avail, yet he fought valiantly, though weak and wounded. But, for all Lakshmana's courage, it seemed as though the sorcerer would easily prevail, until Lakshmana took up his last arrow, and fitted it to his bow. "If Rāma's cause be just, then, all you gods, give me your help," he prayed. With his whole skill and strength he shot the arrow, and it pierced Indrajit's neck, so that his head was struck from his body, and he was slain.

Loud was the rejoicing of the monkeys and the bears, and Rāma clasped Lakshmana in his arms. "You have done well, my brother," he said. "Now, of all the *rākshasa* heroes, Rāvana himself alone remains."

When word was brought to Rāvana of Indrajit's death

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

he wept. "He was my first-born and my best-loved son," he said. "There was no *rākshasa* like him for courage and for sorcery, and now is he slain by a mortal man." Then anger overcame his grief, and he rose up in wrath. "Rāma and Lakshmana shall die for this," he swore. "But first shall I slay that woman Sītā, who has been the cause of so much strife." And he would have gone to the *ashoka*-grove and slain her, had his counsellors not prevented him. "She is a woman," they said. "Will you stoop to slay a woman? Rather go forth and kill her Rāma, and, with his blood fresh upon your hands, return, and make her your wife." And Rāvana heard their counsel, and planned how best to conquer Rāma.

With all the *rākshasa* warriors who remained to him, Rāvana drove forth from Lankā, swearing vengeance. In his great chariot, followed by the *rākshasas* armed with clubs and axes, Rāvana came to the battleground, and swept through the ranks of monkeys with terrible slaughter, until he came to where his brother, Vibhishana, fought close by Lakshmana. Rāvana raised his javelin, and flung it. "Now shall you die, traitor to your kinsmen," he cried.

But Lakshmana saw the weapon as it came, and with his own spear he broke its flight, so that Vibhishana was unharmed, and Rāvana turned angrily upon Lakshmana. "Are you there, who slew my dear son? Welcome is this meeting. My false brother have you saved, save now your own life if you can." And he hurled a magic shaft at Lakshmana, flaming, and hung with jangling bells, and it reached Lakshmana's heart, so that he fell dead; and with triumph for his vengeance, Rāvana returned into his city, but with little rejoicing, for his son was dead.

Rāma ran to kneel beside his fallen brother. "Dear brother," he said, "were you weary of this long battle that

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

you have left it? The love of women and the love of friends—what are they beside a brother's love? Let me lie down beside you and sigh away my life, for if you are dead, Lakshmana, I cannot live."

But while Rāma sorrowed thus, and wept all night, Hanuman remembered the healing herbs which grew on Himālaya, and, taking his giant size, he leapt once more to the mountain peak, and plucked them. He returned to Lankā, and laid them beside Lakshmana, and the dead prince opened his eyes, and drew breath, and sat up, and embraced his brother.

By now it was dawn, and Rāma rose. "To-day shall Rāvana die," he said.

When the sun was risen Rāvana came forth from his palace, bitter and angry, and still sorrowing for Indrajit. In his path stood Surpanakhā, his sister, whose desire for Rāma as a husband had caused the siege of Lankā, and he thrust her from his way, impatient for his vengeance upon Rāma. But Surpanakhā was angered by his coldness, and in her spite she cursed him, saying, "May you never return to your city." Rāvana mounted his chariot, and drove forth, and with him he carried all manner of magic weapons, and at his wrathful coming the day grew dark and lowering.

Indra, god of the sky, looked out from his heaven, and he saw Rāvana's might and Rāma's weakness, and he sent down to Rāma his own shining chariot and his charioteer, that Rāma might meet his enemy in equal fight. With a grateful prayer of thanks, Rāma mounted into the flashing golden chariot, and across the battleground he and Rāvana hastened to meet together.

Magic weapon after magic weapon Rāvana hurled at Rāma: arrows having the heads of tigers and the snarling mouths of wolves, and yet others that turned to poison-

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

ous serpents as they sped to find their mark. But Rāma met the beast-headed arrows with others blessed in the name of the gods, and having barbs like the sun and the moon; and at the serpent-arrows he loosed arrows of his own, blessed in the name of Garuda, the serpent-slayer, and these in their flight turned to birds which devoured the serpents.

Rāma was weary and wounded, yet still he battled on, and, one after another, he struck off Rāvana's ten heads. Yet ever another grew in the place of each that fell, for Rāvana, the king of all the *rākshasas*, could not be slain so easily as his brothers or his son.

But at last Rāma took up an arrow that had been blessed in the name of Brahmā, the Creator, and with all his strength he let it fly at the *rākshasa* king, and it found its mark, and pierced his iron heart, and cracked it wide apart, and Rāvana fell dead upon the ground. A wail rose from the *rākshasas* who still lived, and they fled in terror; but the monkeys and the bears rejoiced, and the gods in their heavens rejoiced, and in awe Rāma heard a voice which called to him, "Most true and righteous one, your task is ended." Sweet music played about him, and the sun shone forth in splendour, and all the battleground grew calm and peaceful; for the purpose for which Rāma had been born was at last accomplished, and the gods were well pleased.

But Vibhishana wept for his brother, whom he had loved, and Rāma said to him, "Do not mourn Rāvana, for he died fighting, and as bravely as he had ever lived. And a warrior's death in battle is not to be regretted. While he lived we were enemies, yet now that he is dead we are foes no longer, and I may lament Rāvana, king of Lankā, as sincerely as you, his brother, do."

Mandodarī, Rāvana's queen, came out from Lankā with

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

a train of weeping *rākshasis*. She stood beside the body of her lord, and for all that he had brought his own destruction on himself by seeking to set another in her place, she wept. "Great Rāvana," she said, "in your day you never fought against a god in vain, and Indra himself you have put to flight, yet now are you slain by a man. But it is no dishonour to you that it should be thus, for it was the will of all the gods that you should die, and Rāma was but their instrument."

Then Vibhishana and Mandodarī performed the funeral rites for Rāvana, building a mighty pyre for him, and laying him upon it, wrapped in royal robes; and so Rāvana was consumed in flames, and Vibhishana, his brother, was proclaimed king of Lankā.

Then the monkeys and the bears entered the fallen city, and Rāma sent Hanuman to the *ashoka*-grove to tell Sītā that Rāvana was slain and she was free once more. Hanuman found her still guarded by the *rākshasis*, and her joy was great when she heard his words. "Go, good Hanuman, tell Rāma that my only desire is to look on him again," she said.

Hanuman returned to Rāma with her message, and Rāma bade Vibhishana go to her. "Tell Sītā to bathe and deck herself, and bring her to me here."

When Vibhishana told her what Rāma had said Sītā looked at her ragged garments, and smiled. "I would have gone to him as I am now, so eager am I to see him once again. But what my lord commands I must obey." And she bathed herself, and combed her hair, and put on silken clothes, and decked herself with jewels. Then, in a litter, she was carried to where Rāma waited.

When Rāma saw the litter he said to Vibhishana, "Bring her closer." And Vibhishana helped Sītā from her

 CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

litter, and brought her to her husband, and her joy glowed from her so that she seemed more beautiful than ever before. But seeing her so lovely, Rāma was suddenly afraid. She is so beautiful, he thought, how could Rāvana have failed to use all his arts and power to persuade her to be his wife? Women are weak, surely she must have yielded to his threats or his temptations? Surely in all the months since I last saw her she cannot have thought with love of me alone? And he said to her, "With the aid of the monkey-folk and of the bears and of Vibhishana, his brother, I have avenged the crime of Rāvana and set you free. Rāvana has died for his theft of my wife, and now good Vibhishana rules in Lankā. Yet it has taken many months to accomplish my vengeance, and in all that time how should a woman who is parted from her lord be true to him? You, Sītā, have dwelt for long in another's house. How should I still call you my wife?"

Sītā was ashamed that he should doubt her love for him; the joy faded from her face, and she wept. But she answered him, "My heart is yours alone and has ever been, and if you will not trust me, then shall I die. When you sent Hanuman to me across the ocean why was it not to tell me that you no longer wished me for your wife? Then could I have died before I saw this moment and heard from your own lips your cruel doubts. Then would you and Lakshmana and all your friends have been saved the toil and grief of this bitter war." Sadly but proudly she turned to Lakshmana. "Good brother, build a high fire for me, that it may prove the truth of what I say, or be my funeral pyre."

And when it had been done as she had asked Sītā walked about the pile, and then stood with downcast eyes and prayed, "Great Agni, god of fire, my love for Rāma has been doubted. I beg you to prove to all my truth and

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

innocence." And before any there could hold her back, she had leapt into the fire, and the flames rose up high, and hid her; while a wailing came from the monkey-folk, and Rāma and Lakshmana wept as though their hearts were broken.

Yet even while they mourned, the flames parted and drew away, and there amid the pyre stood Agni, bright and shining, tall and radiant, and he held Sītā in his arms. "Take your wife, Rāma," he said, "for she is true to you, and loves you alone. Neither bribes nor threats could make her forget that love." Then Agni was gone, and the fire died down, and there stood Sītā in the ashes, her hair and her silken garments unscorched, and not even a single flower wilted of the garland upon her brow.

Rāma smiled, and held out his hands to her, and she ran to him. And in their great love for one another they forgot all fears and doubts as utterly as though they had never been.

Then, because the fourteen years of exile were completed, and Rāma might return to Ayodhyā, Vibhishana gave to him for the journey a magic chariot which moved of itself through the air, making sweet music as it went. And Rāma, with Sītā and Lakshmana, and with Vibhishana and all the monkeys and the bears, went in joy to Koshala, and Rāma saw his own land once again.

In Ayodhyā Kaushalyā embraced her son, safe home at last, and Bharata welcomed his brother, bowing low before him; and he brought Rāma's sandals, and laid them at Rāma's feet, saying, "Take back your kingdom which I have kept for you. Remain with us, and rule as king."

So Rāma, seated on the golden throne, with Sītā at his side, while Satrughna held above them the royal white umbrella, was proclaimed king of all Koshala, and with

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

sacred water the priests sprinkled him and blessed him, while the people of the city could scarce contain themselves for gladness.

Then Sītā paid to sacred Gangā the offerings she had promised, for Rāma had come safely home. And Rāma gave to all who had fought for him so well and bravely—the monkeys and the bears, and Vibhishana, the *rākṣhasa*—great gifts; and to Sītā he gave a necklace of pearls, unmatched in all the world. Sītā took it, and looked at Hanuman, and then again at Rāma, with a little lift of her fair brows. Rāma smiled. "As you will," he said. And Sītā gave the necklace to Hanuman, for all his loyalty and courage, and he shone in pride and joy among the monkey-folk, with the necklace about his neck.

Then Vibhishana went once more to Lankā, and the monkeys and the bears returned to their homes; and Rāma ruled in Ayodhyā, which was prosperous as never before. And during the reign of Rāma there was never drought or sickness or tempest or war; but all men and women in his kingdom of Koshala lived glad and happy lives.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

ILLUSTRATED CLASSIC

Uniform with The Story of Rama and Sita

The Adventures of HATIM T'AI

DOROTHY ENSOR

In this beautifully illustrated book the great Persian hero's adventures are retold for children with all the exuberance, colour, and pace that inspired the original legends long ago, and it has a gentle humour which will commend it to children and grown-ups of to-day.

Husn Banu is the wise and delightful heroine and Hatim T'Ai the selfless hero who, on behalf of Prince Munir who loves her, rides off to find the answers to her seven riddles. Undaunted by monsters, fairies, demons, mountains of ice, and seas of fire, he returns successful from his quest.

In adapting Duncan Forbes's translation of the original rambling Persian stories, Miss Dorothy Ensor has brought us an exciting and refreshing breath from the Orient. Story-tellers and story-lovers will be grateful to her for furnishing the English store-house of children's literature with this brilliant romance.

HARRAP